



Feline Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

Feline upper respiratory infection (URI) is the common term for a respiratory infection caused by one or more viral or bacterial agents. URIs are very common in the shelter environment, as cats usually come to us with an unknown medical/vaccination history and tend to be more stressed, lowering their immune system's ability to fight off infections. We usually send cats with a URI to foster homes, so they can recover quicker in a less stressful environment.

URI Symptoms:

- Sneezing (more than a few times a day)
- Discharge from the eyes and nose
 - URIs can sometimes progress to heavy discharge, fever, and lack of appetite
- Some cats may develop ulcers in the mouth, nose, and eyes
- May become a bit lethargic and have a decreased appetite. Be aware that a complete lack of appetite and fever can lead to dehydration, which requires veterinary attention
- Calicivirus symptoms may include ulcers on the tongue. These can very uncomfortable and may keep the kittens from wanting to eat and need further attention.

Symptoms of a URI may last a few days to several weeks.

Is Feline URI Contagious?

A feline URI is not contagious to humans (or dogs), although these viruses can be transmitted from cat to cat through sneezing, coughing, or while grooming or sharing toys/bowls. A URI can also be transmitted by your clothing, hands, shoes, etc., so it's important to practice good hygiene and sanitization while handling fosters that are sick. AHS recommends always isolating foster cats from personal pets for at least 2 weeks after bringing them into your home. Foster cats with URI should continue to remain isolated from any personal pets until they have been cleared by the medical staff. We also strongly recommend that you ensure your personal pets vaccines are up to date before fostering.

What Should I Do?

- Be sure to give any medications as directed!
 - If your meds are in a bottle, be sure to shake the bottle well before drawing up any medication
 - If you accidentally leave medications out of the fridge, contact the foster team for instructions on if it's ok to continue to use or if it needs replaced.
- Keep your foster cats' noses and eyes clear of discharge by wiping with a warm, wet cloth multiple times a day. Humid air from a humidifier or hot shower can help to clear congested passages. AHS also may provide a nebulizer for severe cases of congestion.
- Monitor for swelling associated with your fosters' eyes. Often cats will get conjunctivitis when they are dealing with a URI and need additional medication(s) to treat this.
- Sometimes, congestion or a sore throat may keep fosters from eating as well, but it's important they get good nutrition to get better! Warming canned food for a few seconds in a microwave can help sick cats smell the food better and make it more enticing.
 - Do **not** feed food containing fish or **any** human foods without the explicit direction of the foster team. If your foster still isn't eating well or skips more than one meal, reach out to the foster team.
- Spend calm/quiet time with your foster cat each day to make him/her more comfortable. Cats with URIs feel much the same as we do when we're sick, so they may not be as playful as usual and may prefer to simply sit in your lap and nap.
- Pay attention to how your foster cat is feeling towards the end of their medication course. If they are still exhibiting any URI symptoms, we may need to recheck or extend medications.