

McDowall Veterinary Practice. Homecare Notes for Diabetic Cats.

1. Diet:

Firstly it is important that we get our diabetic cats onto a low carbohydrate diet, similar to the Atkins diet. (We call it the Catkins diet!) Cats are carnivores and are unable to tolerate high levels of carbohydrate in their diet. Supermarket brands of cat food contain on average 40-50% carbohydrate, while the Catkins diet we will start your cat on has 15%.

The food we recommend is *Hills m/d diet*, which has been specifically formulated for diabetic cats. We prefer to start cats on the canned version as it has slightly less carbohydrate in it, but this food also comes in a dry (biscuit) form.

To help to control diabetes, it is important that we feed the same amount of food every day. We will calculate the exact amount to give to your cat. It is best to feed your diabetic cat twice daily rather than allowing them to graze throughout the day. Twice daily feeding helps us to better control their calorie intake and also highlights if they are not eating and so allows us to adjust their insulin dose accordingly.

If your diabetic cat is overweight, we shall also be aiming to get them to lose weight, as excess fat inhibits the action of insulin. Once overweight diabetics are down to their desired weight, we often find that their insulin requirements reduce dramatically, and some even go into remission.

2. Insulin administration:

We use a human insulin called glargine.

Initial Stabilisation: We will perform the initial stabilisation process in hospital. Your cat will be admitted into hospital where we can monitor them closely and start them on twice daily insulin injections. We shall take several blood glucose readings throughout the first 3 days to ensure that we are starting them on their correct dose. We will also ensure that they are eating well. Some cats will need intravenous fluids to rehydrate them.

Maintenance at Home: Once we are happy that we have stabilised your cat they will go home on twice daily insulin injections.

- The insulin should be kept in the fridge.
- Once a bottle has been started it should only be used for a maximum of 3 months.
- Contact us if there is any discolouration or cloudiness of the insulin.
- We will show you how to draw up the insulin into the syringe. Ensure that you are only using 100 u/ml insulin syringes. Only use syringes obtained from the practice to avoid confusion. Each syringe should be only used once, however for cost saving reasons I am happy for you to use a single syringe per day (i.e.: for both daily injections).
- Place all your used syringes in a yellow sharps container (ask us to order you one if you need one.) When it is full bring it in to us and we will dispose of them for you.

- We will show you where to inject the insulin under the skin. We use the loose skin around the neck region. We advise that you change the injection site on a daily basis, using both sides of the neck to avoid excessive scar tissue forming in a single spot.
- We advise that the insulin injections are given at 12 hour intervals, i.e.: 7am and 7pm. The cat should be fed at the same time.
- If they haven't eaten a meal and are otherwise bright, reduce the next insulin injection by 50% and contact us.
- **Weekly monitoring:** We will check your cats' progress once a week until we are happy that all is stable. We do this every *Thursday* and the routine for these checks is:
 - Do not give your morning insulin dose, and bring your cat, your insulin and their morning meal into the surgery for 8am.
 - We will take a preinsulin blood glucose reading and then administer the insulin and feed them.
 - We will take further blood glucose measurements throughout the day as required.
 - Arrange a late afternoon appointment to discuss the results with me.
- We will also monitor their ongoing weight, thirst and appetite.
- We would like you to *create a spreadsheet* at home and record the following daily measurements:
Date; Insulin dose AM; Amount of food fed AM; Insulin dose PM; Amount of food fed PM; appetite; Amount of water drunk daily; Demeanour.
 Please bring the spreadsheet with you for every check.

Possible Problems:

What do I do if my cat doesn't eat a meal? Reduce the next insulin dose by 50% and contact us.

What if my cat is lethargic and listless? Offer them some normal moist cat food (e.g. whiskas pouches) and see if they respond – they may be hypoglycaemic. Contact us immediately.

What if my cat is starting to drink more again? Contact us as this may indicate that they are no longer stable.

What if my cat vomits or has diarrhoea? Contact us immediately.

What if my cat gets bored of its diet? Contact us – there are other diabetic diets available that we can try.