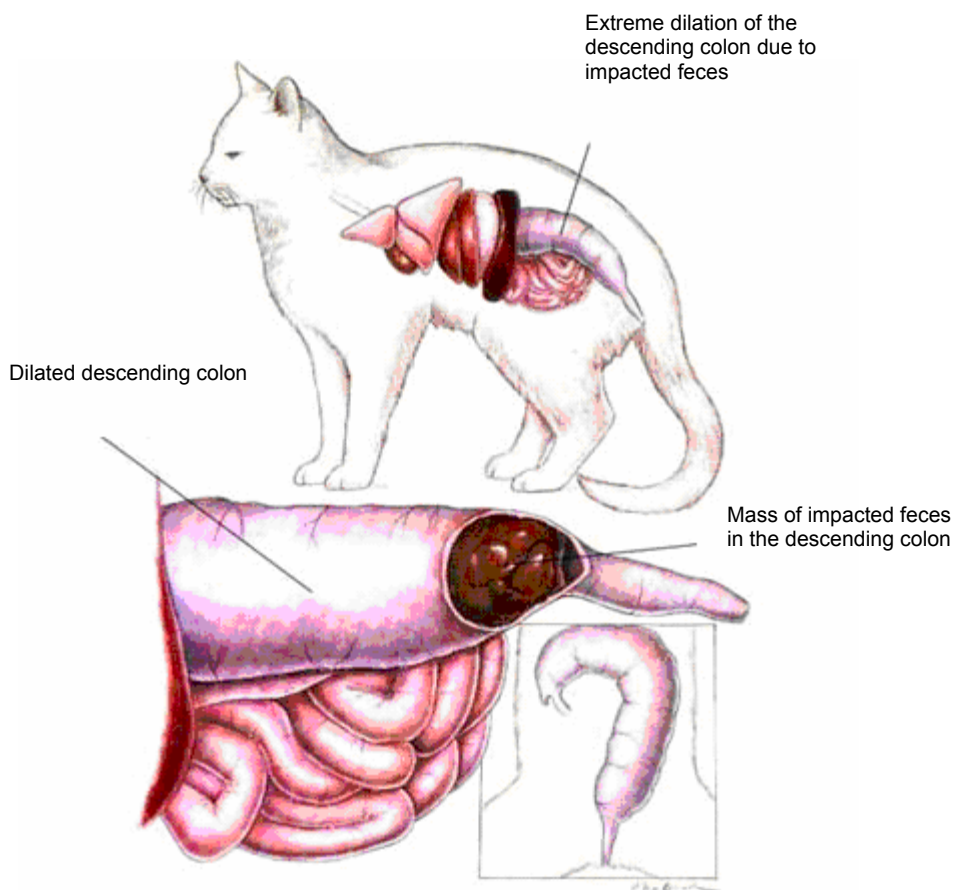


# Constipation/Colonic Impaction



## Constipation/Colonic Impaction

### Diagnostic Plan

History  
Physical examination  
Rectal palpation  
Abdominal palpation  
Abdominal x-rays

### Therapeutic Plan

Fluid therapy  
Laxatives  
Enemas  
Manual removal of impacted stool  
Surgery  
Treat primary cause, if possible

### Nutritional Plan

A moderate- to high-fiber food  
Ensure adequate water intake

## Constipation and Colonic Impaction

Your pet has constipation or colonic impaction. Constipation is the infrequent or difficult passage of dry, hard stools. Colonic impaction is a more severe, chronic form of constipation. Both conditions are managed by treating the underlying cause and by using enemas, laxatives, and high-fiber dietary products. This client education sheet will help you learn more about these conditions and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

### What You Should Know About Constipation and Colonic Impaction

Two major functions of the colon are absorption of water from the stool and storage of the stool until a bowel movement occurs. Constipation results when the stool is retained for too long in the colon, which leads to increased absorption of water, creating a drier, harder stool. Colonic impaction is a progressively more severe, long-standing case of constipation. Passage of a stool may be impossible.

#### Causes

Constipation and colonic impaction are not diseases, but conditions that can be caused by many factors and diseases. Insufficient dietary fiber and water deprivation can cause constipation. Constipation can also result from consumption of hair, bones, sand, and foreign materials ingested by a dog or cat. Environmental factors that affect an animal's daily routine such as hospitalization, lack of exercise, lack of clean water, or a dirty litter box can lead to constipation.

Other common causes of constipation and colonic impaction include aging, anal, rectal, or pelvic pain, tumors of the colon and surrounding structures, prostate gland disorders, matting of hair around the anus, certain drugs, metabolic and endocrine disease, and disorders of the nerves and muscles of the colon.

## Diagnosis

Your veterinarian will perform a physical examination and will ask you questions about your pet's foods, daily routine, and medical history. Rectal examination may help your veterinarian diagnose colonic obstruction, dehydration, and diseases of the anus, rectum, and prostate gland. Laboratory tests and x-rays may help identify other diseases. Occasionally, special instruments called proctoscopes and endoscopes may be used to examine the colon.

## Treatment and Home Care

The key to managing constipation is to identify and treat the underlying disorder. If your veterinarian determines that the underlying cause is due to disease or trauma, medical or surgical treatment may be necessary to correct the problem.

Your veterinarian may need to hospitalize your pet and administer enemas to relieve severe constipation and colonic impaction. Fluid therapy may be necessary to soften the stool if your pet is dehydrated.

Home care consists of giving all prescribed medications and closely monitoring your pet for regular bowel movements. You should also provide free access to fresh water and maintain a separate clean litter box for each cat in your household. Also, groom long-haired pets daily to help remove excess hair that the pet might otherwise eat. Walking your dog 30 to 60 minutes after it eats will often stimulate a bowel movement. Don't give your pet bones, and try to restrict its access to foreign materials.

## Nutritional Plan

If your pet has constipation or colonic impaction, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. Foods rich in fiber (containing at least 10% fiber) aid in the management of constipation in pets as in people. Fiber increases water retention in the intestine, which softens the stool, making it easier to pass. Increased fecal bulk, created by the fiber itself and the water absorbed by the fiber, stimulates the reflex to have a bowel movement and shortens the time it takes for the stool to pass through the intestine. Fiber-rich foods that aid in the treatment of constipation and colonic impaction and may help prevent their recurrence include Hill's® Prescription Diet® Canine r/d® and w/d® for dogs and Hill's® Prescription Diet® Feline r/d® and w/d® for cats. If your pet is unresponsive to fiber therapy, your vet may recommend Hill's® Prescription Diet® Canine or Feline i/d®.

## Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). However, do not add water to your cat's food. Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

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## Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Nutritional Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.