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## STOOL CHANGES IN CATS

Changes in the stool occur frequently in our cats. Stools may become soft or watery, they may be accompanied by a lot of mucus and sometimes there may even be blood in the stool.

Lots of things can cause changes in the stool. Some infectious causes are parasites, bacterial overgrowths, or viruses. Sometimes we can see a footprint from these agents in our evaluations of the stool. We will always ask for fecal samples for cats with stool abnormalities. Sometimes cats get changes in their stool from non-infectious things. Some diseases of other parts of the body may impact on the intestine and cause changes. We may ask to perform tests that are designed to tell us if other parts of the body are working OK. Sometimes the problem is confined to the intestine alone and falls into a unique category called “inflammatory bowel disease”. This process may be related to food sensitivities or “allergies” to the bacteria that normally lives in the gut.

If your cat has had abnormal stools for awhile, or is not responding to our first line of medication as expected, we will probably want to do some further investigation to find the cause of the problem. We can develop a more effective treatment plan if we have as much information as possible.

A final note about blood and mucus in the stool: Many cats will have a normally formed stool that will have blood or mucus streaked on it. That tells us that there is irritation to the large bowel. Sometimes it can be a simple mechanical irritation, for example, from a bolus of hair or an unexpected trip to the garbage can. Other times it can be from something more chronic, like parasites or inflammatory bowel disease. It is almost always manageable. Cats rarely get colon cancer so try not to worry about something really awful right off the bat.

We know that abnormal stools are really frustrating and disturbing to you and your cat. Sometimes you have to be more patient than you want to be. But a logical diagnostic and treatment plan can be implemented to help get to the root of the problem and make everyone more comfortable.