

Why has my cat suddenly started to drink so much water? I use to never see her at her water dish. Now she is there several times a day and also licking water out of the sink and shower. She is overweight, but otherwise she seems normal.

It's good that you noticed this change in her behavior as there are many common diseases which could be the cause of increased thirst or water requirements in cats and the sooner it is diagnosed, the better. Many of these medical problems can be managed, but not cured. When a feline patient is reported to be drinking excessively, the two most common diseases I would consider are diabetes or kidney disease. There are many other diseases which can cause increased water consumption and many can be diagnosed with a simple diagnostic data base. Testing may include laboratory work such as a urinalysis, complete blood count, blood chemistry evaluation, thyroid hormone level screening, and possibly radiographs (x-rays). In most cases these routine diagnostics will explain your cat's sudden interest in water.

Some pet owners also note increased urinations, either in or out of the litter box. Some individuals try to limit the amount of water available to their cat in order to reduce the pet's needs to urinate more often. This is especially true when the pet begins to urinate in the house inappropriately. Please don't consider doing this. Withholding water can be dangerous as it may create dehydration. The increased thirst follows the increased loss in the urine, not the other way around so if water is withheld, dehydration can even be life threatening.

Since your cat is drinking excessively and is overweight, it is possible that she has diabetes. If she is diagnosed with diabetes, there is a chance it can be reversed with a change in diet alone. A low carbohydrate and high protein diet may be prescribed to help her body regulate her blood sugar. If a diet trial doesn't work by itself, she may need insulin injections twice a day and regular monitoring of her blood sugar levels and other indicators of good control.

Increased drinking and or urination are generally warning signs and require medical care. If increases are extreme the need for medical intervention may be urgent. Many such conditions are routinely treated and much less costly to get under control if they are diagnosed at the earliest stage.

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