

# Sneezy, Congested Cats

- Over the Counter medications
  - **Cetirizine**- 2-4mg per pound once or twice daily
    - This is an antihistamine (Zyrtec)
    - It may cause sedation or possibly drooling but cats typically tolerate this medication very well
    - It comes in 5mg and 10mg tablets but can also be found in disintegrating tablets (which can be helpful with cats) and a liquid form
      - You will have to give a large amount of liquid so I do NOT recommend the liquid
  - Nasal decongestant drops
    - **Pediatric Otrivin (Oxymetazoline HCl 0.05%)**- 1 drop per nostril once daily
      - Will help relieve the congestion and flush out mucous
      - Preferred medication because it is only once daily
      - **Do NOT give for more than 3 days** in a row; giving for a longer duration will cause them to have “rebound congestion” that can be worse than their original symptoms
    - **Little Noses (Phenylephrine HCl 0.125%)**- 1 drop per nostril twice daily
      - The form with Phenylephrine will help with the congestion but you can get just the non-medication solution for simply flushing out mucous
      - Be sure to get the pediatric concentration (0.125%) if buying a generic version of the medicated drops
- What we can do for your cat
  - Vaccinations
    - **Annual booster**
      - This provides immunity against 2 viruses (Calicivirus and Herpes virus) as well as a bacteria (Chlamydia) which can help the cat fight off the respiratory symptoms better on their own. This can include less severe symptoms or less frequent “outbreaks”
      - These viruses and bacteria are NOT the same as the human versions and your cat cannot give them to you. They are strictly cat viruses/bacteria.
    - **Fel-O-Cell**
      - This is an intranasal vaccination that provides a stronger immunity against the Herpes virus (by far the most common culprit, especially with chronic and recurring respiratory signs) directly in the nasal and oral passages where the infection is bothering them
      - If your cat’s respiratory symptoms are seasonal/allergy related, vaccinations provide limited relief. They can still help prevent any secondary infections but do not treat the allergy itself.
  - Therapy laser
    - The laser uses infrared light to reduce inflammation, reduce pain, encourage blood flow and faster healing, and help kill bacteria.
    - Regular therapy laser sessions help reduce the symptoms in cats but the degree to which owner’s notice an improvement with the therapy laser varies from cat to cat.

- The therapy laser is a non-painful and non-invasive way to treat your cat without the systemic side effects of medications. The response to the laser in cats varies between cats and requires you bring your cat to our office for a few minutes several times a week.
- Antibiotics
  - We have a variety of injectable (that last 2 weeks with no at home treatment) or oral medications that can help treat secondary bacterial infections.
  - Signs of a secondary bacterial infection include
    - Lethargy
    - Decreased appetite
    - Thick, green discharge
- Other medications
  - L-lysine
    - This is an anti-viral medication that helps to suppress the Herpes Virus in your cat (which typically causes stress induced respiratory signs).
    - It comes as a flavored oral paste.
    - It is very safe to give but some cats seem to respond better than others to it.
  - Cerenia
    - This is an anti-nausea medication that has been shown to help upper respiratory signs as well.
    - It is typically given in small doses on a schedule of 5 days on – 2 days off (give it Monday-Friday but not Saturday and Sunday) or every other day, which ever works best for your cat
    - It is a very safe medication but is a pill so can be difficult to administer to some cats
  - Steroids
    - Steroids are VERY helpful with upper respiratory signs. It reduces mucous production, reduces inflammation and congestion, and opens up the airways so that they can breathe easier.
    - It can be given temporarily to help get the symptoms under control (which is safer than long term), or if necessary can be given at a maintenance dose as well.
    - Steroids do have a lot of potential effects on the entire body though and are not recommended long term. We try to balance the severity of the symptoms vs the effects of the steroids to give your cat the best quality of life.