
Upper Respiratory Infections in Shelter Cats Adopter FAQ

Almost all kittens/cats pulled from a shelter (or even a pet store) are going to develop a cold when they are pulled out. This typically goes away on its own once the kittens are out of the shelter, eating good food, and getting lots of love from you!

Occasionally these colds (upper respiratory infections) will need antibiotics. Please read the following information to learn what to look for and how to help your kitty.

General Symptoms

- Sneezing
- Green or yellow discharge from the nose or eyes
- Lethargy
- Lack of appetite

Sneezing

If your kitty is just sneezing or having clear discharge: At this stage antibiotics are generally not needed. Just make sure they are eating and active.

Nose or Eye Discharge

If your kitty has green nasal discharge contact your regular veterinarian to get started on some antibiotics. If your kitty is getting congested he/she may stop eating, so it is important to keep the nose and eyes as clear as possible. Keeping them clean with wet cotton balls or a wet cloth is a good idea.

Lethargy or Lack of Appetite

If your kitty is lethargic and/or not eating this could be an emergency and should see a vet ASAP. If you cannot get into your vet please contact APA!.

At this stage more aggressive treatment may be required. If they stop eating for more than 24 hours this can be a big deal for a small kitten. You can try warming the food up in the microwave, feeding wet food instead of dry (something cheap and smelly like Friskies), tuna (packed in water not oil), or human baby food. If they still won't eat, you need to start force-feeding. To do this, you'll need to receive instructions from a medical clinic.

Sanitation & Prevention

These infections can definitely be contagious to your other cats in the house. With all new cat additions you need to keep them separated from any other cats (except littermates). Give them separate bedding, food/water dishes, litter boxes and scoopers, etc. Wash everything with hot water and bleach to prevent spreading illnesses to other cats you bring home. It is also a good idea to wash dishes and bedding regularly for sick animals. If you use eye ointment don't share amongst other cats unless instructed to, even if they have the same symptoms-they could have different viruses!