

Wilmette Pet Center

"the place for people who love pets"

Hairballs are a problem that many cat owners encounter. And they're not only a cause of misery for your cat and a nasty surprise to find around your house, but can impact your cat's health, too, by causing intestinal blockage. But they do not need to bother you or your cat any more!

How hairballs form:



Longer haired breeds of cats are more at risk of getting hairballs, although any cat can develop them.

As cats groom themselves, their tongue catches loose hairs that they swallow. These hairs normally pass through their system with no problem, but they can begin to collect in the stomach. The only way for a cat to get rid of these masses of hair is to throw them up. The swallowed hair can also begin to impact on their intestines, causing a negative feedback loop: this impacted hair triggers more shedding (since the body thinks there's too much hair around), and then as they groom, they swallow more hair, increasing impaction and increasing the risk of hairballs.

Because of this, all these solutions are great for cats that shed a lot (the less hair impacted in their system, the less they are going to shed.)

Practical steps:

Brushing - Sounds too simple, but most people overlook this basic step in controlling hairballs. Brushing, especially using a great de-shedding tool such as the Furminator, helps reduce hairballs by removing the hair before they can swallow it. Brushing does not need to be a chore; you can brush them in segments, for just a few minutes each day. Besides helping reduce shedding and hairballs, it's a great bonding time for you and your cat.



Our top three ways of preventing and treating hairballs:

Digestive enzymes - These enzymes help break down your cat's food, making it more bioavailable (so you get more out of what you feed.) But they do so much more! As the enzymes move through the digestive tract, they break down the hair fibers into small pieces and make it easier for them to pass through their system. It's kind of like Drano for your plumbing.

Enzymes are found in products like **Digest All+**; it has the added benefit of containing probiotics and prebiotics - beneficial gut bacteria and their food source to help keep their gut flora healthy. We recommend adding this to your pet's diet whether they have hairball problems or not.



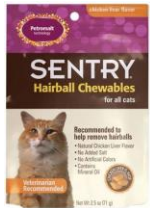
Fiber - Fiber "scrubs" the stomach and intestines and helps the hair pass through better. It sorts of acts like the plumbers snake, cleaning out their "pipes".

You can find fiber in such products as **Missing Link** and **Nature's Logic Food Fortifier**. These products contain a lot more than just fiber, like important phytonutrients they won't get elsewhere. We recommend adding them to your pet's food, whether they have hairballs or not. There are a couple of diets that focus on hairballs by containing extra fiber, like Blue Buffalo and Wellness Indoor recipes.



Regular use of these products not only help prevent the formation of hairballs, but can help improve loose stools and benefit their skin and coat health.

Lubricants - Various compounds are use to provide relief of hairballs by helping the hairs slip through the system.



Sentry Hairball Chewables are made with mineral oil to help relieve hairballs and constipation. It's made with a natural chicken flavor that cats enjoy.

Laxatone contains mineral oil and soybean oil with molasses and natural flavors. Offer a small strip on your finger, or put it on their paw so that they will lick it off. Laxatone can also be used to help prevent hairballs and impactions in rabbits.



Richard's Organics Hairball Remedy is a petroleum and petrolatum free recipe that uses soybean, vegetable, and cod liver oils to naturally help hairs slip through their system. It comes in a variety of flavors to entice your cat to take it, or you can place it on their paw so they lick it off.



Vet's Best Hairball Relief is one of our favorite and most effective products, as it's a safe and natural way to help cats pass hairballs. This petroleum-free formula contains fiber, in the form of psyllium seeds, to help scrub the hairs, enzymes, in the form of papaya extract, to help dissolve the hairs, and muscologenic herbs, slippery elm bark and marshmallow, to create mucus to help the hair slip through. These chicken flavored pills are easy to break up to make giving them to your cat easier.

You'll get the best results by using several methods together. Stop by and talk with our trained staff about the best options for your cat. With the right knowledge and products, your cat does not have to suffer from hairballs and excessive shedding again.