

Clear Your Cat's Runny Nose for Good

A natural approach to restore pet health

By Kristina Fleming, DVM

Rescued and adopted kittens and some older cats often suffer from upper respiratory infection symptoms. Usually brought on by stress, a virus overwhelms a cat's immune defenses, causing fever, discharge from the nose or eyes, sneezing, lethargy, and poor appetite. Traditional veterinarians often prescribe antibiotics. Homeopathy offers cat owners a more natural approach to clearing their cat's runny nose with a remedy aimed at restoring overall pet health.

Should I take my pet to the vet?

Homeopathic remedies can boost pet health, and pet owners can learn to use them at home. However, knowing when to treat an animal at home and when to seek professional homeopathy care is vital to your pet's long-term health. Veterinary homeopaths (and homeopaths who treat humans) classify ailments into short-term illnesses and chronic conditions. Short-term illnesses usually have an inciting cause, such as an infection (respiratory virus, parasites, etc.) or a trauma (catfight, car strike, etc.). They begin abruptly, and in non-emergency situations, a pet owner can use homeopathic remedies and first aid resources to treat their pet at home.

Chronic conditions develop slowly and insidiously with repeated episodes of symptoms that may involve an overactive immune system, hormonal imbalances, long-term pain, or more. Examples of chronic conditions include recurrent urinary tract infections, chronic renal failure, inflammatory bowel disease, and others. These long-term ailments require

veterinary homeopathic care to strengthen the pet and restore health.

Why is my pet sick again?

Generally, if a pet experiences the same (or similar) short-term illness three times or more, they are susceptible to developing an underlying chronic condition. Susceptibility to repeated sickness and the resulting chronic disease stems from an animal's weak points. For example, when a pet faces stressors, such as travel, new additions to the family, dietary changes, or environmental toxins, it must reestablish homeostasis, a balanced internal state of being that supports health.

Many animals quickly regain an internal balance and readily land on their feet (cat pun!) after stressful events. Others, not so much. For instance, some cats can easily digest any protein, while others vomit and have diarrhea from slight meal changes. And some cats love it when a kitten joins the family. They don't miss a meal and happily play with their new friend. Others, like Toby in the following story, retreat, hide, and develop physical symptoms.

Meet Toby, the sneezing cat

Four-year-old Toby, a beautiful long-haired male cat, found his forever home with a family of devoted cat lovers and several adult cats. Within a few days of his adoption, Toby began to reverse sneeze, a strong reflexive respiration cats and dogs use to clear irritants from the back of the throat. It sounds like snorting or honking, and the animal usually stretches out its neck during the sneeze. Toby also had a brief episode

of runny eyes and nose, so I examined him but found no physical issues. I gave Toby an L-lysine supplement with anecdotal reports of immune support for cats experiencing stress or viral illness. Toby's symptoms resolved after taking the supplement, and he settled into his new life.

Two more furry family members

About a year later, Toby's family acquired another cat. Within two weeks, Toby developed a runny nose and began sneezing. His family gave him *Natrum muriaticum* 30c because his nasal discharge resembled egg whites, a common symptom associated with that remedy. However, Toby did not get better and arrived in my office, miserably sneezing and discharging.

During the vet visit, I learned that after the new kitten had arrived, Toby began hiding from his family and the other household cats in a soft and comfy space. I gave Toby a dose of *Pulsatilla* 30c because his behavior matched the remedy's characteristics. (See *Remedies for URI in Cats* on page 16).

Fast forward another six months to when Toby's family brought home a kitten they found in a parking lot. Guess what? Toby began sneezing and draining from his eyes and nose once more. His symptoms again matched *Pulsatilla* 30c, and he stopped sneezing and draining after two doses.

Toby's susceptibility pattern emerges

After observing three episodes of Toby's sneezing and nasal discharge, I saw a



What to Expect at a Veterinary Homeopathy Appointment

A professional veterinary homeopath will first collect symptoms from the current illness, as well as everyday quirks and mannerisms:

- Weight, eating habits, diet
- Physical symptoms from the vet exam and those reported by the pet owner
- Temperature preferences (i.e., does the pet prefer being warm or cool)
- Sleeping position
- Mental and emotional symptoms: demeanor, mannerisms, preferences, things that make them feel worse or better, tolerance for company and being handled

Next, the homeopath organizes and ranks the symptoms and looks for patterns and stimuli that stress the animal. The homeopath may use timelines and mind maps before repertorizing to find a remedy that matches your pet's symptoms.

pattern in his short-term illnesses. When stressed with novel surroundings—new home, new kittens—Toby developed upper respiratory symptoms, which indicated Toby needed strengthening to reduce his susceptibility to stress.

Constitutional homeopathic care

Toby's family scheduled a constitutional homeopathic care consultation, during which I looked more broadly and deeply into Toby's entire state of being rather than focusing on individual symptoms. (To learn more, see *What to Expect at a Veterinary Homeopathy Appointment* above.)

After hearing more about Toby's general nature and observing him in my clinic, I

compiled the following list of symptoms to repertorize and begin my remedy search:

1. Sleep position – lying on his back
2. Nose – sounds obstructed during respiration
3. Abdomen - he did not like to be touched on his abdomen
4. Demeanor – indifferent
5. Eating – grazing, fills up quickly
6. Skin – red, irritated skin around his neck
7. Fur - matted around his neck

A remedy for Toby's unique symptoms

Based on Toby's unique symptoms, my computerized repertory program generated a list of remedies, and I considered three: *Nux vomica*, *Sulphur*, and *Lycopodium*.

I immediately ruled out *Nux vomica* because Toby was not as sensitive to light, noise, touch, and other environmental stimuli as he would have been if he needed *Nux vomica*. Also, Toby did not have difficulty urinating or defecating. Pets who need *Nux vomica* feel the urge but must strain to pass urine or feces. Finally, Toby was indifferent but not irritable, a symptom often associated with *Nux vomica*.

Animals who need *Sulphur* are usually quite outgoing and friendly, and Toby was not. In addition, I would have expected more itching and eruptions around his reddened skin if he needed *Sulphur*. Also, animals that need *Sulphur* can be sensitive to heat, whereas Toby loved his warm, cozy bed.

I chose *Lycopodium* for Toby because it addressed his stuffy nose, snuffly breathing, and frequent nasal discharges. Also, Toby liked to graze rather than eat large meals, and those who need *Lycopodium* feel full after only eating a small amount. This remedy is good for irritated skin, especially in skin folds (Toby's neck). I found great information to confirm Toby's remedy in the *New World Veterinary Repertory*; *Lycopodium* was the only remedy listed for hair matting around the neck.



Remedies for Upper Respiratory Infections (URI) in Cats

Put two pellets of a 30c potency in four ounces of water. Let dissolve and stir before each dose. Give your cat a ¼ teaspoon dose every two to four hours.

You should see a lessening of symptoms within three doses if you have chosen a well-matched remedy. As symptoms subside, reduce the dosing frequency.

Aconite – high fever, hot watery discharges, and red swollen eyelids; for use only within the first 24 hours of an illness

Arsenicum album – violent sneezing and burning, watery, and irritating discharges; animal is restless, anxious, sensitive to light, prefers to stay hidden, drinks only tiny sips of water, and may only have symptoms on the right side

Mercurius solubilis (or vivus) – foul-smelling, cheesy-like, yellow or bloody discharges; white-coated tongue, bad breath, and ulcers around eyes, nose, and mouth; animal is irritable, dull, lethargic, thirsty, and feels worse with temperature extremes, weather changes, and during the night

Natrum muriaticum – sneezing with clear or cloudy egg-white-like discharges that may stain bedding; animal feels worse around 10 a.m., when lying down or being in a warm room, and better when alone

Pulsatilla – symptoms change hourly; thick, creamy discharges that obstruct the nose, and itchy eyes, often on the animal's right side; animal has no thirst, feels worse in a hot, stuffy room, better in the fresh air, and seeks comfort from soft beds and its owner

Silicea – hard-to-clear, crusty nasal discharge and clogged tear ducts; animal is chilly, thin, and weak with poor immune response; it feels worse in cold, damp air, when touched, and on hearing loud noises, and better being wrapped up and warm

I recommended *Lycopodium* 30c for Toby, a dose each time his nose started draining or when he retreated to his hiding place.

Toby stops sneezing

After starting the as-needed doses of *Lycopodium*, Toby no longer had short-term illnesses, and he interacted with all his family members and hungrily ate full meals. His family is so pleased that Toby no longer suffers from sneezing, nasal discharge, and anxious feelings when a new furry family member joins the household.

How to lower your pet's susceptibility to chronic conditions

Learning to identify short-term illness versus chronic conditions helps you

pursue a higher quality of life for your pet. If you discover your pet is showing repeated susceptibility in one area, you can nearly always predict that chronic problems may develop later. The sooner you address your pet's susceptibility, the more quickly and effectively your pet can heal.

Consider making notes about your pet's repeat symptoms and its responses to homeopathic remedies you give them. Remember, when your pet has three rounds of the same set of symptoms, it's time to contact a veterinary homeopath. To find a veterinary homeopath, visit theavh.org.

Constitutional homeopathic care is not designed as a forever approach because you, your pet, and the homeopath are

working together to build your pet's health to a point when it no longer needs support—an excellent reason for me as a veterinary homeopath to work myself out of a job.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kristina Fleming, DVM, trained at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine and has practiced small animal medicine across her home state of Virginia. Seeking a more holistic approach to animal

health, Kristina is currently a student at the Academy of Homeopathy Education, where she is immersed in clinical training and solid homeopathic philosophical coursework—and loving every minute of it!