

## Asthma in Cats

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### What respiratory diseases commonly affect cats?

Obstructive and allergic respiratory diseases, sometimes called "asthma," "bronchitis," or "bronchial asthma", affect many cats. Unfortunately, these diseases are not easily classified, and probably represent a variety of airway disorders. These conditions do share a common finding of "hyper-responsive" or "over-reactive" airways.



If the airway of a cat is sensitive to certain stimuli, exposure to these agents leads to *narrowing of the airways*. The inciting agents are usually direct irritants to the airways or things that provoke an allergic response in the respiratory tract. Regardless of the cause, the end-result is the same: 1) muscle spasms in the bronchi, 2) increased production of mucus, and 3) the accumulation of cellular material in the airways. The inability to clear the bronchi of this material leaves the cat susceptible to secondary respiratory infections.

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With obstructive lung disease, the cat experiences the greatest breathing difficulty during *expiration* or breathing out. Air may become effectively trapped in the lungs, causing the lungs to over inflate. In some cases, this chronic trapping of air leads to the development of *emphysema* in the cat.