



## Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

### Don't let your cat become a sweet-tooth victim

Does your cat magically appear when it hears the cookie jar open? If your cat has a sweet tooth, beware that chocolate can be very toxic to cats, particularly un-

sweetened chocolate. The chemicals that cause toxic reactions include caffeine, theobromine and theophylline. Signs of poisoning initially include vomiting, which

may be followed by diarrhea, increased urination, restlessness, weakness, seizures and coma. Death results from cardiac arrhythmia or respiratory failure. Treatment administered by a veterinarian may include evacuating the cat's stomach, repeated treatments of activated charcoal every three hours, and the use of drugs to control seizures and heart arrhythmias. So, next time you're tempted to give in to your cat's sweet tooth, remember the health risks associated with chocolate.

### If your cat gets a fat lip...

Chin edema or fat-chin is a painless and nonitching enlargement of the chin or lower lip that may increase and decrease with intensity. Usually it is a manifestation of a linear granuloma—a form of eosinophilic granuloma complex (EGC).

Cortisone medications are commonly used in treating EGC. Fortunately, chin edema usually does not cause the cat any problems, and occasionally may even resolve without therapy.

Although a common skin disorder in cats, the cause of EGC is poorly understood and the relationship among the various forms is unclear. It is, however, often seen in cats that have an underlying allergic skin disease, like flea bite hypersensitivity, food allergies, and allergic inhalant dermatitis. Therefore, allergies should be investigated in cats with chronic or recurring lesions associated with EGC.



### Ah-choo!

Cats can catch colds just like we do. These upper respiratory infections are usually caused by feline herpesvirus or feline calicivirus, or by both. Fortunately, you can't catch a "cold" from your cat, or vice versa, as these viruses are species-specific. Two other organisms—mycoplasma and chlamydia—can cause similar signs in cats although they primarily affect the lining of the eyelids (conjunctiva). Cats afflicted with "kitty colds" have variable degrees of sneezing, watery eyes with occasional squinting, and a runny nose.

You can help protect your cat from "kitty colds" by vaccinating for feline herpesvirus (FHV-1), feline calicivirus (FCV) and chlamydia. Although the vaccines cannot provide 100% protection against infection, they do help to prevent severe illness. Additionally, providing your cat with good nutrition and reducing stress can minimize the incidence of recurring "kitty colds."

The information for *Feline Forum* has been prepared by the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, NY. Copyright 1994.



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