

Decoding cat vomit

What colors and textures can tell you about your pet's health



If it seems like your cat throws up more often than your dog, that's because they (probably) do. Cats have more sensitive gastrointestinal systems, and their self-grooming habits mean they can ingest a lot of undigestible fur.

Sudden, one-time vomiting is often caused by a hairball, your cat eating something they shouldn't have or an empty stomach (bile and stomach acid can irritate their digestive system and make them vomit a yellow-green, often foamy, liquid).

- Feed your cat a late-night snack (to prevent morning vomiting) or leave out a measured amount of kibble for them to snack on.
- Move any plants that are toxic to cats out of your pet's reach.
- If your cat vomits bile with hairballs, increase their grooming sessions and add small amounts of high-quality digestible fat (such as a fish oil formulation labeled and dosed for cats) to their food.

Vomiting after meals could indicate that your cat is eating too fast.

- Offer smaller, more frequent meals or spread your cat's food over the surface of a plate so they have to take smaller mouthfuls.
- Switch to food with different, more limited ingredients.

See the vet if your cat experiences any of the following:

- Chronic vomiting, which is repeated vomiting either several times in row or over days or months (can be a sign of intestinal blockage or other GI issues, parasites, allergies, or diseases such as kidney disease, liver disease or hyperthyroidism)
- Potential toxin exposure, loss of appetite or constipation
- Reddish or bloody vomit (can signal a potential injury in the mouth, esophagus or stomach or that your cat has eaten a foreign object)
- Dark brown or black coffee-grounds-textured vomit (may indicate bleeding in the upper GI tract)

Learn more at humaneworld.org/catvomit101.



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Green with bits
Plants (ate plant material)



Green or yellow
Bile (prolonged empty stomach)



Clear or yellow with hair clumps
Hairball (if chronic, may need grooming help)



Red, pink
Blood (internal bleeding, medical emergency)



Brown with undigested chunks
Regurgitation of food or other ingested substance (ate too fast)



Brown with coffee ground texture
Blood (internal bleeding, medical emergency)



Clear
Water (if chronic, potential diabetes)



White, foamy
Stomach irritation (if chronic, potential infection or allergy)



Clear with spaghetti-like texture
Roundworm parasite (needs anti-parasitic medication)