

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) is a complex condition that commonly results in **urethral obstruction in male cats**. Obstruction prevents normal urine outflow, causing affected cats to strain to urinate and become increasingly painful. Most importantly, it is a **life-threatening emergency** if not promptly treated.

Initial management typically involves **urinary catheterisation and medical stabilisation**. Despite appropriate treatment, up to **30–40% of cats will re-obstruct**, often resulting in repeated hospitalisation.

Surgical Management

Surgical management is recommended in cats with **recurrent or non-resolving urethral obstruction** to reduce the risk of future episodes and improve overall quality of life.

The male feline urethra narrows significantly as it passes through the penis, creating a natural “bottleneck” where obstruction most commonly occurs, particularly in the presence of crystals, stones or urethral plugs.

Perineal urethrostomy (PU) is a procedure that removes this narrowed segment and creates a **permanent, wider urethral opening**, making future obstruction much less likely.

When Should PU Be Considered?

PU should be considered in:

- > Recurrent urethral obstruction
- > Urethral stricture
- > Penile or distal urethral trauma
- > Obstructive urolithiasis not amenable to non-surgical management

At MASH, **early surgical intervention (typically at the 2nd–3rd obstruction)** is recommended. This approach helps reduce repeated ICU admissions and may improve outcomes, as multiple catheterisation events can increase the risk of urethral scarring.



Important Considerations

Perineal urethrostomy removes the anatomical “bottleneck” that predisposes to obstruction but does **not treat the underlying FLUTD**.

Ongoing lower urinary tract signs can still occur and continued medical and environmental management is often required.

These recommendations include:

- > Encourage drinking (e.g. water fountains)
- > Feeding wet food and/or a prescription urinary diet
- > Multiple litter trays per cat in various locations
- > One litter tray per cat plus one extra
- > Separate food and water bowls for each cat
- > Providing places to rest and hide
- > Opportunities for play and safe outdoor access (where appropriate)
- > Use of synthetic pheromones (e.g. *Feliway*)

Outcomes

Perineal urethrostomy is a **reliable and effective procedure** for preventing life-threatening urethral obstruction.

In published studies:

- > Re-obstruction following PU is **rare**
- > Approximately **90% of owners report high satisfaction**
- > Most cats have **good to excellent long-term quality of life**



Complications

Perineal urethrostomy is a technically demanding procedure, and outcomes are strongly influenced by surgeon experience and surgical technique.

Potential complications include:

- > Haemorrhage
- > Stricture formation
- > Wound dehiscence
- > Urinary tract infection
- > Persistent urinary incontinence

In the hands of an experienced surgical team, **outcomes are excellent, and complication rates are low.**

Summary

Perineal urethrostomy is the recommended surgical option for cats with recurrent urethral obstruction.

While ongoing management of FLUTD is still required, **surgery significantly reduces the risk of future obstruction**, decreases repeat emergency presentations, and provides excellent long-term outcomes.

