



## FELINE UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION

Thank you for choosing Arizona Spay Neuter for your cat's surgery. As a cat owner, you should be aware that your cat may be carrying feline Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) without your knowledge. Carrier states (or "latency states") are very common, especially in strays and kittens born to stray mother cats. We are concerned about this because it may affect how your cat recovers from surgery in the next 1-7 days. Please read this sheet for more information.

Cats with URI will sneeze, have runny eyes and occasionally cough. Many people (including some veterinarians) will identify this as allergies. While it is certainly possible for cats to have allergies, the vast majority of cats with this clinical picture have an actual infection.

There are five agents (bacteria, organisms similar to bacteria, and viruses) that cause URI in cats, and all of them are extremely contagious among cats. Fortunately, humans do not get these infections and only one of the less common agents can occasionally infect dogs. Cats spread the disease by sneezing microscopic air droplets loaded with the infectious agents, sharing food and water dishes, or licking another cat's face. In many cases, once these infectious agents are in the cat's body, the body's immune system cannot completely get rid of them. Unfortunately, we have no medications or vaccines that will completely get rid of the infection once it is in the body. The agents hide in tissues associated with the respiratory system where they will emerge as active infections when the body is stressed. Stressors capable of bringing out a latent infection include anesthesia and surgery, any injury, change of living situation (new home, marriage, divorce, new baby, etc.) and other illnesses. It is easy to see that carrier cats may have outbreaks repeatedly during their lives.

Mother cats lick their kittens' faces and are thus able to give the infections to their kittens very early in life, before we are able to vaccinate the kittens. This is the most likely explanation for why we have so many carrier cats, especially among strays and kittens born to stray mothers. Because URI is so contagious, any cat who goes outside and contacts other cats can pick it up. **Many people have cats who are carriers and they are not aware of it.**

If your cat is a carrier of this disease, the stress of anesthesia and surgery will likely bring out the infection, usually in 1-7 days after surgery. Signs you will see are sneezing, runny eyes (maybe with squinting or swollen membranes), and occasionally coughing. If these signs show up, you should have your cat's regular veterinarian check the cat as soon as possible. Fortunately, the majority of cats experiencing an outbreak will recover easily. Also, be aware these cats are contagious when they have an outbreak, so other cats in the house will probably develop similar signs later.