

Chin Acne

Ever noticed what looks like little black specks or possible sores all over your cat's chin? There is a pretty good chance that both are caused by chin acne.

Pathophysiology:

- Chin acne is a common condition in cats caused by an excess buildup of oil under their chin area. Cats have oil glands all over their body, but in some areas they can be more concentrated such as under the chin and on the base of the tail. The buildup of oils on the tail is called stud tail.
- When your cat has an increase in oil production in the skin, it can result in a blackish debris type buildup in those areas, or impacted or infected oil glands, similar to acne on people.

Causes:

- **Diet.** Certain diets can increase oil production in your cat. The reason for this is to give your cat glossy looking fur, but if your cat has problems with acne, these diets can exacerbate the acne.
- **Metabolic processes.** Anything that causes your cat to have increased oil gland production, including a few disease processes or normal metabolic changes, can also contribute to acne.
- **Plastic bowls.** These have also been implicated in contributing to acne. While plastic bowls will not cause the oil build up, they can increase the likelihood that bacteria sitting in scratches and imperfections in the plastic will rub into your cat's chin, leading to infected oil glands and pustules.
 - Stainless steel, glass, and ceramic bowls have not been shown to cause this.

Treatment:

- There are several treatments for chin acne that help to minimize it and may also prevent it from reoccurring.
 - **Brushing under the chin.** Probably the easiest way to combat chin acne. You can take an old toothbrush and brush under your cat's chin daily. This helps to break up the oil and keep the oil glands from becoming impacted. In addition, most cats enjoy this.
 - **Cleaning under the chin.** If your cat will tolerate it, you can clean the area under your cat's chin with warm soapy water, or with a cat wipe with astringent properties that is safe to use on cats. Do not use hydrogen peroxide. Depending on how advanced your cat's chin acne is coupled with how well they tolerate having their chin cleaned may determine how often you want to do this.
 - **Acne wipes.** You can also use salicylic acid, which is the main ingredient in Stridex to wipe under your cat's chin as needed to minimize oil buildup. Just be sure not to use benzoyl peroxide as that is a little too harsh to use on cat skin. Also, be prepared, most cats do not care for the smell of salicylic acid, and so may not be cooperative.
 - **Antibiotics.** If your cat has one or more infected oil glands, we may also recommend antibiotics, either topical or systemic, depending on the degree of infection.
 - **Prescription medications.** For cats that have very severe acne, we do have prescription ointments and cleaner that you can use to help clear up the acne when other treatments have not worked.

If you have any questions regarding any of the above, please feel free to contact us at All Feline Hospital at 402-467-2711 or info@allfelinehospital.com.