

Linear Foreign Body: String under the Tongue of a Vomiting Cat

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Cats love to play with string, yarn, thread, ribbons, and other similar materials. Sometimes the cat will swallow this material leading to a serious condition known as a "string (linear) foreign body". The material may pass into the digestive system or become wrapped around the cat's tongue, and the two ends swallowed. In either case, the material causes a problem when it enters the small intestine.

What are the symptoms of a string foreign body?

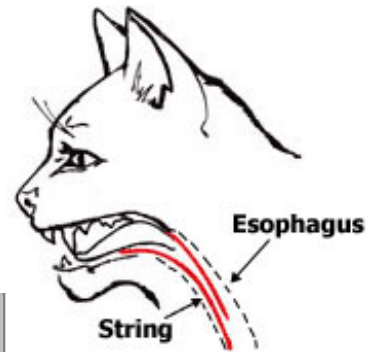
In addition to vomiting, linear string foreign bodies can cause the intestines to 'accordion up' on themselves or cause an [intussusception](#). Cats with linear string foreign bodies often will not eat or drink.

How is a string foreign body treated?

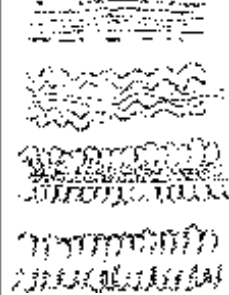
If you see a string or thread under your cat's tongue, do not pull on it, but contact your veterinarian immediately. Pulling on the string could cause severe damage to the intestines or esophagus. Your veterinarian will give your cat a complete physical exam and probably take radiographs (x-rays) to see if the intestine has an accordion appearance. Your veterinarian will cut the string. In some cases, a "wait and see" approach can be taken to see if the string will pass through. In most cases, however, it will be recommended that the string be surgically removed. If the string remains in the intestine too long, it can actually cut through the intestine and cause a severe life-threatening infection.

How are string foreign bodies prevented?

Keep string, yarn, any threads used for sewing or needlework, dental floss, Christmas tree tinsel, and other string-like objects out of the reach of cats.



The top 3 illustrations show the inside view of the intestine as it "accordions" up on the string



Lower illustration is the outside view of a section of intestine with a string foreign body