



FADING KITTEN SYNDROME (For Fosters)

Fading Kitten Syndrome is a life threatening emergency in which a kitten, sometimes ones that were previously sick, “crashes” and begins to fade away. If not dealt with by a foster parent or technician immediately, it can result in death. If you are fostering a kitten 12 weeks or younger, you familiarize yourself with this handout so you know what to do if it happens.

FKS is caused by 2 things: hypothermia (being too cold) and hypoglycemia (not enough blood sugar). You must combat both of these or the kitten will die.

Symptoms

- Extreme Lethargy - unable to stand or hold head up, not responding when petted
- Feels cool to the touch
- Gasping for breath
- Meowing/crying out in distress

When this happens, it is vital that you take these immediate steps!

Step 1 - Get them WARM!

Create the “burrito” towel. Immediately wrap the kitten up in a warmed towel (use a dry towel out of the dryer) like a burrito leaving only their face exposed. Their whole body (tail, ears, and paws) should be in the towel, only nose and mouth exposed. Do not take the kitten out of the towel to adjust them, check on them, etc. - this is very important! Every time you take them out you will make them cold again, even if it is only for a second.

You MUST apply an extra source of heat (listed below). The kitten’s body can’t warm itself up with just a towel alone, you have to apply extra heat. Also, your body temperature is much lower than what a kitten should be, so trying to warm them up with your body heat won’t work either.

If you have heating pad (ideal), then wrap a heating pad *turned on low* around the towel. Tape it or use a large rubber band to secure it around the towel so it stays wrapped around them. Don’t let the heating pad touch them directly (it can cause burns!) Make sure the “burrito” towel is between their skin and the heating pad. A snuggle disc is not the same thing as a heating pad! They need to be surrounded by warmth.

If you don’t have a heating pad (not ideal, but better than nothing), you can either:

- a) Keep your dryer running full of towels. Grab a new hot one every 5 minutes, trade that 2nd towel out for a new hot one. Don’t remove the “burrito” towel.
- b) Fill 2 socks full of rice, tie the ends of them so it doesn’t spill out. Throw them in the microwave for 3 minutes. Keep them next to the kitten on the outside of the burrito



Protocol

towel. Every 30 minutes reheat one sock and leave the other next to the kitten so she doesn't cool off.

Step 2 - Get their blood sugar up:

Once you get the heat on them, get a bowl, mug or Tupperware and mix a few tablespoons of sugar or Karo Syrup in some hot water. Stir it up so you get a sugar water solution - you don't want it super syrupy like pancake syrup, but you do want it to be as strong as possible while still pretty runny. Using a syringe or medicine dropper, you want to **give 3 drops every 3 minutes into the mouth**. If they aren't swallowing, try not to get it down the throat, try to get it on the tongue or gums. Set an egg timer or use the stopwatch on your cell phone to make sure you are doing it at least every 3 minutes. **Every 5 minutes or 10 minutes will not work - it must be every 3 minutes!**

Step 3 - Call the Emergency Foster Line

Call the emergency foster care team at 662-825-0614. Don't leave your kitten to do this call or forget to do your sugar every 3 minutes. They will not have any extra advice for you that is not in this handout, but they will need to be made aware of what is going on so that we can schedule an check up and to determine the cause of the "crash."

Prognosis

We generally have very good success with these kittens if you follow the above steps. *We DO NOT recommend you rush them to the vet for many reasons:*

You have the motivation to sit right there with them and make them your top priority. A vet clinic has many patients it is helping and can't give your kitten the 100% undivided attention you can give them.

Your kitten will continue to be cold/hypoglycemic on the way to the vet, in the waiting room, and in the hospital while they try to determine what is wrong, etc. Most kittens won't last long enough for them to start the treatments there.

Keep in mind that it can sometimes take hours for them to come out of it and start acting normally again. Don't give up! Once they do come out of it, they will continue to need frequent monitoring and will need to have access to a heating pad. Once their temperature is over 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit rectally, food can be introduced to the kitten once again. Kittens must eat in order to maintain a healthy body weight and to keep from getting hypoglycemic.

Also, keep in mind that even with all the love and attention and perfect treatment of this condition, some of them still won't make it. Kittens are very fragile and can get critical quickly. Try not to blame yourself during this difficult time and focus on all the kittens you have personally saved by opening your home to foster kittens. Remember, if it wasn't for you, any kitten you've ever fostered might not have made it on its own without help from humans.