

FRIDGE CHEAT SHEET

How to tell your cat is in pain

A summary of the Opatulo blog guide: opatulo.pl/blog. Golden rule: compare your cat with their own normal from a month ago – pain is a mosaic of small changes, not one symptom.

BEHAVIOUR RED FLAGS (2–3 at once for over a day = call the clinic)

- Not jumping where they always did · goes down the stairs differently · lies around more, patrols less.
- Goes next to the litter tray · stopped grooming (clumpy coat) or obsessively licks one spot.
- Hides in new places · avoids touch, hisses when stroked · eats less, walks away from the bowl.
- Meows differently than usual · purring does not mean everything is fine – cats also purr in pain.

THE GRIMACE SCALE – check the face (30 s, from a distance, while the cat is calm)

- Ears: spreading sideways, "flattened"? · Eyes: squinted, tense?
- Muzzle: pinched, tense? · Whiskers: stiff, straight forward? · Head: below the shoulder line?
- Score: 0 normal · 1 slight change · 2 clear change. 4+/10 = likely pain → see a vet.
- Pain posture: a stiff "loaf" with an arched back, straight front legs, head low – do not wait for it to pass.

STRAIGHT TO THE CLINIC

- A male cat sitting in the litter tray with no result – a life-threatening emergency, go at once.
- No eating for more than 24–48 h (fasting alone can damage a cat's liver).
- A pain posture that does not go away despite calm.

NEVER

- No human painkillers, ever. Paracetamol is poison for a cat – a fraction of a tablet can kill. Ibuprofen is dangerous too. Painkillers for cats are prescribed only by a vet.