

How to talk with clients about feline diabetes blood testing and monitoring

Example Dialogue

This is an example of a discussion that would usually take place during an ADR/sick patient visit, after the physical examination, where a patient has clinical signs consistent with possible diabetes mellitus.

Technician greets client:	
Technician:	I'm so sorry Lilly isn't feeling well today. I'm glad you brought her in so we can take a look and get to the bottom of what's going on with her. Dr. Smith has completed his physical examination and, based on those findings, plus her recent history you've shared with us, Dr. Smith suspects that she may have diabetes. With your permission, Dr. Smith would like to run some blood work, which would consist of a full chemistry panel to assess her internal organ function, electrolytes to determine her hydration status and a CBC to assess whether or not she has anemia or inflammation. Doctor Smith would also like to get a urine sample, if possible, and run a special fructosamine test that would tell us whether or not we could rule diabetes in or out as the reason for Lilly's condition today and potentially identify any other disease states as well.
Pet owner:	What happens if Lilly does have diabetes?
Technician:	Well, the good news is that if it is diabetes, it's very treatable. There are a few treatment options and most of them can be done from home to manage the disease, such as putting her on a low-carbohydrate diet and giving her daily insulin injections. In the beginning, we would want to see Lilly every 2–3 weeks until we're sure that her insulin dosage is appropriate and her disease is being managed properly. Once she's stable, we would only need to see her every 4–6 months to make sure her treatment is continuing to be effective. We can go over this in more detail once we know for sure whether or not she has diabetes.
Pet owner:	Okay. So how much will the blood tests you recommended cost me today?
Technician:	A complete blood count, a comprehensive chemistry analysis, including electrolytes, and a urinalysis, as well as the fructosamine test is \$XX.
Pet owner:	Yes, let's do the blood tests.
Technician:	Great. I think that's the right thing to do. We're going to go out back and draw some of Lilly's blood and start the testing. If you have 15–20 minutes to wait, we can share the results with you and discuss next steps once we know what we're dealing with. Here's a brochure that describes each of the tests we talked about today in more detail. I'll come back to discuss the results with you and we can address any questions you may have then. (Give client the IDEXX brochure, What's Diabetes Mellitus? for reference. It will help them remember what you've talked about in the exam room.)
Pet owner:	Yes. I'll wait to hear the results. Thank you so much.
Technician:	No problem. I'll see you in about 15 minutes.

What if clients object?

Here are some common questions and answers that can help clients understand and agree with blood testing.

Q: Why does this cost so much?

A: This price includes all the blood and urine tests required for a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation in addition to the physical exam, including:

- Comprehensive blood tests to evaluate liver, kidney and gastrointestinal tract function and overall health status and to rule out potential life threatening-conditions, such as diabetes, pancreatitis, infection and cancer.
- Your pet's stay in our hospital, which includes nursing care and monitoring.
- Describe other services, if required, such as an IV CATH, pain management, fluid therapy, pulse oximeter and monitoring, and explain why it benefits the pet and pet owner. Be sure to include ALL services, even nail trims and dental inspections.

Q: Are all these services really necessary?

A: All of these services ensure your pet receives the best care possible—now and in the future. By combining the physical exam with the blood work, we are able to get a complete view of your pet's overall health.

Q: Are all of these blood tests really necessary?

A: We recommend all of these tests for the following reasons:

- Blood work allows us to screen for a variety of diseases and conditions that may not be evident in the physical exam. In addition, we can use these test results in the future to monitor your pet's health. Hematology results give us an indication of your pet's overall health status as well as any underlying infections or inflammatory processes.
- We evaluate the chemistry, electrolyte and urinalysis results to determine:
 - **Kidney function:** The kidneys act as a filter, removing waste and toxins from the body. If they're not functioning properly, it could explain elevated test results that may be out of range or be classified as something else going on.
 - **Liver function:** The liver's function affects all other major organs. If there's a liver problem, it could impact other areas of the body.
 - **Glucose levels:** Glucose can be too high (diabetes) or too low (hypoglycemia). Either one can have a significant impact on your pet's health. Good outcomes for diabetic patients depend on regular and comprehensive monitoring, including a physical exam and blood work, so we can consistently regulate your pet's glucose. This information guides our medical decisions and helps us choose the most effective treatment to ensure your pet's quality of life.
 - **Acid Base and electrolyte disturbances:** These could indicate a fluid imbalance or something much more serious that we should act on right away.