

# Cats now have an FDA-approved pill to treat their diabetes

December 9 2022, by Cara Murez

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Owners whose cats have diabetes now have a new option to care for the

condition in their otherwise healthy pets.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Thursday [approved](#) the first pill to improve control of diabetes in some [cats](#).

The [drug](#), called Bexacat (bexagliflozin tablets), is not [insulin](#) and is not meant for cats who have the type of diabetes that requires treatment with insulin. Rather, it is what is called a sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitor.

The [active ingredient](#) in this pill prevents the cat's kidneys from reabsorbing glucose into the blood. This excess glucose leaves the body through the urine, lowering [blood sugar levels](#).

As part of the approval, the FDA requires that Bexacat labels include a boxed warning about the importance of patient selection. Only certain cats should take the drug, determined through careful screening.

Potential patients must be screened for kidney, liver and pancreatic disease, as well as ketoacidosis, a high level of a type of acids known as ketones in the blood.

Bexacat also shouldn't be used in cats who are being treated with insulin or in those who have previously been treated with insulin.

The drug should not be started in cats who are not eating well or who are dehydrated or lethargic at diagnosis.

Cats taking this medication should be monitored regularly with exams and blood tests, as well as watched for lack of appetite, lethargy, dehydration and [weight loss](#).

Cats who are treated with Bexacat may be at an increased risk of serious

adverse reactions, including [diabetic ketoacidosis](#), the FDA said. This can be fatal and should be treated as emergencies.

In a news release about the approval, the FDA explained that like in humans, the cells of a cat's body need sugar in the form of glucose for energy. Cats with diabetes can't properly produce or respond to the hormone insulin. Insulin helps cells use glucose for normal function.

Without any treatment, diabetic cats will have high levels of glucose in their blood and urine. They may experience symptoms such as increased thirst and urine, weight loss and increased appetite.

Typically cats with diabetes are treated with diet and insulin therapy, including twice-daily injections given 12 hours apart.

Bexacat is a once-daily flavored pill given with or without food to cats who weigh at least 6.6 pounds.

The FDA cited two field studies that were six months long and an extended field study in its approval. The studies found the medication was more than 80% effective in improving blood sugar control in cats with diabetes.

Veterinarians and clients should report any adverse events to the FDA.

**More information:** Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine has more on [diabetes in cats](#).

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