

## How I Got My Diabetic Cat “Off the Juice”

Learn about the how, when, where and who of managing feline diabetes.

Today at Paws and Effect HQ, we’re celebrating Bella’s two-year “remissioniversary!”

Bella came to us with insulin-dependent diabetes, and just a couple of weeks later she was in remission. If you have a diabetic cat, I hope you’ll take heart from our story and use some of the resources that helped me to help Bella.

I met Bella at [HART of Maine](#), a no-kill cat shelter in southern Maine. She and several other diabetic cats had been under the care of HART’s former “diabetic den mother,” Margaret B. When Margaret learned that I wanted to adopt Bella, she took time to teach me to test her blood glucose and how to give insulin shots. She was just a phone call or text away as I learned how to care for a diabetic cat. Thanks to her and my vet, I got Bella into remission, and here’s how I did it.

### 1. Join a support community

Every caretaker of a diabetic cat should have a mentor. Margaret was a real blessing to me, and it would be awesome if everyone who lives with a “sugar kitty” had a Margaret of their own. But even if you don’t have a Margaret, you can find great information and support at [FelineDiabetes.com](#). Through their [Feline Diabetes Message Board](#), people with diabetic cats can learn and get emotional support as they get used to the idea of living with a diabetic kitty.

### 2. No kibble, ever

Food that is low in carbohydrates and high in protein is key to managing diabetes. I feed Bella and the rest of the Paws and Effect Gang a freeze-dried raw food that I rehydrate with warm water. But you don’t have to go raw — there are quite a few canned foods that meet the criteria for managing diabetes, including a few brands you can find in the grocery store. Check out [Dr. Lisa Pierson’s cat food comparison chart](#) and look for canned food whose calorie content is less than 10% total carbohydrates.

### 3. Home test daily

If your diabetic cat is on insulin, you absolutely must learn to home test. You’ll be able to track your cat’s blood glucose levels more accurately and you may avoid life-threatening situations like hypoglycemic crises or diabetic ketoacidosis. There are lots of glucose meters available, and many meters used by diabetic humans are appropriate for use in cats. [FelineDiabetes.com](#) has great info on [how to home test and what glucometers work the best and are most cost-effective](#).

#### 4. Work closely with your vet

Every vet knows the basics of diabetes, but some are willing to go the extra mile and really help you help your cat by learning all they can about the disease. A good vet who is a good communicator, who can help you understand what's going on with your cat, is crucial.

#### 5. Be prepared for emergencies

Have a bottle of corn syrup and an oral syringe on hand so that if your cat's blood sugar goes too low, you can bring her back up before she goes into a crisis. Also, have your vet's number and your closest emergency clinic on speed dial. I also recommend programming the address of the emergency clinic into your GPS, because few things suck more than getting lost while your cat is very sick.

#### 6. Learn about the different types of insulin

There are different varieties of insulin, and some may work better than others for your cat. Bella did very well on Lantus when she was still insulin-dependent, and I've heard of other cats that do well on Levemir and Humulin. If you're having trouble controlling your cat's blood glucose, talk to your vet about trying a different type of insulin.

#### 7. Even if your cat goes into remission, test occasionally

Bella hasn't needed insulin since January 18, 2013, but I still have my blood glucose meter and testing strips (testing strips do "expire" after a while, so I have to go get a fresh batch). I also have my vet run a mini blood panel on her when she has her annual physical, just to make sure her blood glucose and other lab values are good. The peace of mind and proof of remission is more than worth the small extra cost.

Bella's diabetes was uncomplicated, but some cats have secondary conditions like [acromegaly](#) that can make the disease hard to control. However, it's common veterinary knowledge that a large majority of diabetic cats can be controlled and even brought into remission through diet alone. If you have a "sugar kitty" of your own, take heart: Bella and the diabetic kitties at HART of Maine are living proof that remission is possible!

Another organization that was crucial in saving Bella's life was [Diabetic Cats In Need](#). They provided free testing supplies and meters for anyone who adopted a diabetic cat from HART, and over the seven years they've been operating, [DCIN has saved the lives of more than 600 diabetic cats in the US and Canada](#). I've tried to return the favor by donating and volunteering to assist the organization with my time and talents, and I hope after reading this post and learning about DCIN's amazing work, you'll make a donation to help them save other "sugar kitties."

As always, please remember that this post is not prescriptive: I'm not a veterinarian and even if I were, I don't know your cat. I'm simply sharing what worked for Bella and me.

Do you have a diabetic cat? What have you done to control her disease? Do you have any tips for other cat caretakers with extra-sweet kitties? Do you have any questions about diabetes? Ask away in the comments: if I don't know, I'll try to find someone who can answer your questions.