



Kitty tongue
close up

Papillae look like hooks or barbs; they give a cat's tongue that sandpaper feeling.

A cat's tongue is a very useful tool. The surface of the tongue has papillae or hooks facing toward the back of the mouth. When a cat licks something these hooks help direct the food toward the back of the throat.

If a cat licks an item like string, thread, netting used over strawberries or tulle ribbon these hooks can make the cat swallow something they shouldn't.

Every time the cat attempts to spit out the foreign item, it causes a swallowing reflex moving the item farther back down the cat's throat.

A foreign body in the cat's digestive tract can be very dangerous or even deadly. It can block the passages and damage tissue. Linear foreign bodies such as thread can slice through the intestinal tract. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you see a string or similar object protruding from your cat's anus, do not pull it out, consult your veterinarian immediately! Signs to watch for if you think your cat may have eaten a foreign body include: lethargy, painful abdomen, loss of appetite or vomiting multiple times. If you think your cat may have a foreign body you should take them to a veterinarian right away.

The best thing to do to prevent foreign bodies is to "kitty proof" your home. Anything that a toddler might put in their mouth a cat might do the same. The following is a partial list of items that could be linear foreign bodies: strings used on meat, tinsel, yarn, dental floss, hair ribbon, tulle, thread (and needles), string from dangly toys. Tuck away wand toys after play so your cat doesn't tear it apart and ingest any parts while unattended.

Make sure you dispose of dental floss in a place where your cat can not retrieve it.

