

CATS ONLY

Acne in Cats

Asthma in Cats

Constipation in Cats

Chronic Kidney Disease in Cats

Diabetes Mellitus in Cats

Eosinophilic Granuloma Complex (EGC)

Feline AIDS (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus)

Feline Cardiomyopathy

Feline Elimination Disorders

Feline Hyperthyroidism

Feline Leukemia Virus

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Upper Respiratory Diseases in Cats

ACNE IN CATS

Feline acne is a skin disease affecting the chin of cats. Although fungal infections and allergies may be a cause of this condition, it is thought to be primarily the result of the inability or lack of desire of some cats to clean their own chin. Most cats groom themselves on a daily basis and clean their chins by licking their front feet and then utilizing the moist foot to clean the underside of the chin.

Blackheads are nothing more than blood and infection that have accumulated in the hair follicle. The condition can sometimes be very severe and painful. In severe cases, it can result in open sores on the chin. Recurrence of the problem after treatment is common because of the ongoing lack of cleaning the chin by the cat.

ASTHMA IN CATS

It is similar signs seen in human asthma patients. Signs vary from a mild sneeze or cough to periods of extremely difficult breathing. Physical exercise will often make the condition much worse. For this reason, most affected cats spend the majority of their time resting and not active since they learn this minimizes the respiratory signs. The exact causes of Feline Bronchial Asthma are not known. The suggested cause in most cases is allergy.

Allergies can develop to many things such as pollens, molds, foods, dust, and chemicals that are inhaled. The allergic reaction within the body causes a narrowing (constriction) of the small air passages within the lungs. This results in a lack of air being able to get into the lungs supplying oxygen to the body. Recurrent attacks are common. Time between attacks varies greatly. There is no way to predict when or how severe the attack will be. We suggest allergy-testing cats that suffer recurrent attacks to determine if the offending cause can be eliminated from the environment or possibly the cat may be desensitized through immunization, similar to human therapy. Treatment varies with the severity of the problem. It is important to learn to recognize the signs and seek our assistance at the first sign of an attack.

Treatment must be fitted to the particular needs of your pet:

- Give oral medications as directed to counteract asthma.
- Use long acting injectable medication to counteract signs of asthma.
- Prescribe a bronchodilator in the form of an inhaler/nebulizer to use as needed.
- Limit exercise
- Keep the pet's environment as dust-free as possible. Use alfalfa pellets for cat litter.
- Consider Allergy Testing and Desensitization in severe cases that recur.

FELINE CONSTIPATION

Many cats develop constipation, resulting in less frequent bowel movements. This leads to dry, hard stools, which cause pain and difficult straining when the cat attempts to have a bowel movement.

There are many causes of feline constipation. Some common causes include:

- Dietary: Bones, hair, foreign material, excessive fiber, inadequate water intake
- Environmental causes: Lack of exercise, stressful change in environment, inability to ambulate due to illness or injury, obesity.
- Drugs: some antihistamines, heart medications, sedatives, antacids, iron supplements, diuretics
- Painful defecation due to: Anal sacculitis and abscess, foreign bodies (string, hair, bones), tumors, pelvic fractures, spinal cord damage, intestinal scars from other injuries, trauma, cancerous and noncancerous masses, congenital defect such as atresia ani in manx cats and their mixes.
- Central and peripheral neurologic disorders
- Metabolic and endocrine diseases causing impaired colonic smooth muscle function, weakness or dehydration.

MEGACOLON-a special case of chronic, recurrent constipation and obstipation

Mega colon is a condition in cats where the colon becomes very dilated and not able to evacuate the stools from the body. Occurs usually in the last part of the colon, called the descending or distal colon. The major cause of this condition is thought to be some type of damage to the nerve supply controlling the muscles of the colon. An xray or radiograph of your cat is needed to aid in diagnosis of this condition. Knowing that megacolon is the cause of your cats constipation and not another factor is important in determining lifelong therapy and changes in diet.

Retention of fecal material can have a very detrimental effect on the cat. The bacterial and toxins (sometimes called endotoxins) produced by the retention of fecal material for too long may then be absorbed into the bloodstream making the cat very sick, sometimes resulting in death.

TREATMENT:

Directed at the specific cause of the constipation. Treatment may include manual removal of the bowel movements, cleansing enemas, laxatives, nerve stimulants, antibiotics, and sometimes even surgery when the condition cannot be controlled with medications. Therapy is individualized to each cat.

CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE IN THE CAT

Did you know that if your cat lost 3/4 of their kidney function they would not show any signs of kidney disease? They would act and behave pretty much as normal. Once greater than 75% of kidney function ceases, we see elevations on bloodwork. Many cats show signs such as drinking more water than usual over a period of months and seem to urinate more often as well. In addition, many cats vomit occasionally, but this can be difficult to discern since many cats expel hairballs occasionally. Some cats may appear emaciated, lethargic or dehydrated as their skin loses elasticity and it may appear to be “stuck” to their body. Some family members do not report any noticeable clinical signs of kidney disease in their cat until the disease is well advanced, making them somewhat unsuccessful candidates for treatment. Some signs of advanced kidney disease may include a very unusual odor or bad breath from the mouth or a visible mouth ulcer.

The cause for chronic renal disease is usually age related irreversible changes to the kidneys and is one of the most common older age diseases of cats. But it can be caused by other factors that may have treatment options. Getting a kidney xray and biopsy in addition to routine tests will be very valuable in determining what type is occurring in your cat.

How do you diagnose kidney disease?

Initially, a routine blood chemistry panel may demonstrate elevations of Blood Urea Nitrogen (BUN) along with elevated creatinine and phosphorous. Some cats may have other elevations in addition to those mentioned on their chemistry panel such as electrolyte disturbances of potassium, sodium or chloride. A complete blood count (CBC) may reveal abnormalities such as anemia or white blood cell abnormalities. Sometimes the CBC abnormalities are present due to the affects of long term diseases can have on the immune system and the resulting anemia is often termed “anemia of chronic disease”. Complete urinalysis would focus on abnormalities such as protein in the urine, blood, bacteria levels, sediment, low specific gravity and some other factors. Radiograph (xray) may be important in determining evidence of anatomic abnormalities, calcifications or space occupying masses.

CONTROL, RATHER THAN CURE, IS THE MAIN GOAL OF THERAPY

What is the absolute best treatment for kidney disease in the cat? The best treatment would be a kidney transplant! While this procedure *is* available, is very cost prohibitive to most people and it remains somewhat impractical to find a donor within the time frame of your cats needs. So treatment in cats is often directed at realistic supportive care to prolong the life of your pet. Therapy varies and is based on each cat’s individual needs. Some examples include specialized kidney diets, prescription medication to decrease the creatinine and BUN elevations, supplementation to improve anemia and the immune system, use of phosphorous binders, and fluid therapy when needed.

DIABETES MELLITUS IN CATS

What is diabetes and why did *my* cat develop it?

Simply put, diabetes mellitus is a failure of the body to regulate its blood glucose. The pancreas is the organ responsible for producing the hormone insulin. Insulin helps glucose get into the cells of our body where it is vital to our body’s daily energy needs.

When this process is impaired or no longer happens at all, the carbohydrate, fat and protein metabolism of the body are all affected. But the most important problem in diabetes is the

inability for insulin to transport the important energy supplying glucose to the body cells that is in jeopardy.

Cats keep eating food to supply energy to the body but it isn't able to get there very well because of this impaired or broken down transport system of insulin bringing glucose to cells. Any cat can get diabetes but many cats have a history of being middle to older aged and of being mildly to moderately obese.

What Are Some of The Signs of Diabetes?

Because diabetes can often cause cats to feel more thirsty due to osmotic diuresis, many people report a history of **excessive drinking, and excessive urination**. Cats that are diabetic often have urinary tract infections due to long standing glucose present in their urine.

Some long term signs include **weight loss** and **muscle wasting**, because the body starts to break down its own fats and proteins to provide energy to glucose deprived cells. As a consequence, many cats usually **eat more** to compensate for this, unsuccessfully. Appetites of most diabetic cats are very good, unless we are in a late stage of the disease or ketoacidotic and they may become **anorexic** and lethargic at that point. They may begin as very robust or even **overweight** cats that appear to be **losing weight** despite a healthy appetite.

Diabetes is one of the most common middle to older age disease processes that develops in cats.

Some cats develop **difficulty moving** about especially in the **rear legs**. This is often referred to as **diabetic neuropathy** and only affects some cats. Degree of mobility difficulty varies among cats and can improve once your cat is regulated.

How is diabetes initially diagnosed?

Many pets are brought in by their family for signs similar to those mentioned above. Some laboratory tests that aid in evaluating and confirming diabetes are **chemistry panel/CBC, baseline fructosamine level** and **complete urinalysis**.

EOSINOPHILIC GRANULOMA COMPLEX

The cause of this group of diseases that affects cats has focused on an underlying hypersensitivity reaction. This is particularly true in cats. Insect, environmental, and dietary hypersensitivities have been documented in cats. Genetic predisposition and bacterial infections have also been seen in cats. Idiopathic cases (unknown cause) do exist.

Clinical findings can be in three forms. Eosinophilic ulcer of the upper lip usually not itchy, eosinophilic raised plaque of the inner thigh or belly that is very itchy and eosinophilic granulomas that are raised and can be on any part of the body, but usually common on the head, bridge of nose, ear, pads of feet, lips, chin, oral cavity and lower thighs.

FELINE AIDS (FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS)

First, there is no evidence to indicate that the disease is transmittable to humans. Cat owners should not be concerned that their cats could expose them to human AIDS.

The disease is predominantly seen in older cats (unlike the leukemia virus) and blood samples from all over the U.S. have tested positive. The disease is "nationwide."

Although similar to Feline Leukemia Virus, cats infected with FIV do not test positive for leukemia. There is a specific test available to screen for FIV. It is reliable and requires only a small amount of blood.

Signs of the disease are similar to those in humans suffering from AIDS and include swollen lymph nodes, severe weight loss, diarrhea, respiratory infections, anemia, and parasitic infections. The virus affects the cat's immune system.

FIV infection should be suspected in any cat that has repeated infections or continually gets in fights with other cats. Cats most at risk for this disease are those exposed through contact with the outdoors (indoor/outdoor cats) and are not vaccinated for FIV, cats who have never been previously tested as a kitten even if they are now an indoor cat, and cats who are exposed to other cats who go outdoors and are not vaccinated for FIV.

FELINE CARDIOMYOPATHY

A disease of the heart muscle results from either a very thickened heart muscle (resulting in very small heart chambers) or a very dilated (stretched) heart muscle (with very large heart chambers). Both forms result in a heart that is unable to function properly in pumping blood throughout the body. A major complication of this condition is the tendency to develop BLOOD CLOTS in the heart chambers. These blood clots escape the heart and travel through the arteries until reaching a point too small for them to continue. The clot then obstructs blood flow to the rest of the body from that point on. The most common location of this obstruction is where the aorta splits to go down each rear leg. When this happens, the cat suddenly in a great pain becoming quickly paralyzed in the rear legs. This is the first sign of cardiomyopathy in many cats and is the reason the cat is brought to the veterinary clinic.

Causes of this condition are often unknown, but the following medical problems have been identified as potential causes: TAURINE DEFICIENCY AND HYPERTHYROIDISM.

TAURINE DEFICIENCY:

Taurine is an essential amino acid and was found to be deficient in many commercial cat foods before being identified as a problem. Cat food manufacturers have now corrected the problem since taurine was identified as being important and deficient.

HYPERTHYROIDISM:

A condition resulting from an enlarged thyroid gland can also cause the problem. The disease develops slowly over a long period of time before clinical signs become evident. Cats have the ability to hide the disease until the very late stages. For this reason, most cases are not discovered until very late in the disease process.

EARLY SIGNS include inactivity and poor appetite. Severe signs of heart failure don't become evident until just before death. The major sign of heart failure in the cat is labored breathing from the inability of the heart to pump blood to the body as well as accumulation of fluid in the lungs because the blood is not flowing back to the heart fast enough.

DIAGNOSIS is often made with routine EKG and xray of the chest and lungs. Cardiac ultrasound is often performed in addition if further characterization of the cardiac condition is needed.

FELINE ELIMINATION DISORDERS

One in every 10 cats will have a litter box lapse in their lifetime. The 19 most common reasons are listed below.

1. The cat is suffering from a medical problem involving the urinary tract.
2. The cat experiences a bout of geriatric constipation.
3. The caretaker does not keep the litter box as clean as the cat wants.
4. The owner changes the brand or type of litter.
5. The owner changes the location of the litter box
6. The owner buys a new box and throws out the old one.
7. The owner cleans the litter box with too harsh a cleaning product.
8. The location of the litter box is too busy or not private enough for the cat.
9. The home is too large for just one litter box.
10. The cat inadvertently gets locked out of reach of the litter box.
11. The cat is kept from using the litter box by another animal in the house.
12. There are too many cats and not enough territory.
13. There are too many cats and not enough litter boxes.
14. Stray cats can be seen/smelled near the cat's territory.
15. The unneutered male cat has come of age and is marking his territory.
16. The unsprayed female is in heat and advertising for suitors.
17. Over time, the cat has developed an aversion to the texture of the litter.
18. The cat was never properly trained to use the litter box in the first place.
19. The cat is stressed by a change in routine or environment, including a new baby, new furniture, work schedule changes, vacations, overnight guests, or a move.

FELINE HYPERTHYROIDISM

A disease of middle age to older cats in most cases caused by a growth of the thyroid gland that causes an increased production of thyroid hormone. Benign growths rather than malignant growths are more common in cats. Symptoms of hyperthyroidism can include weight loss despite a good appetite, poor hair coat, sometimes hyperactivity and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Although sometimes family members do not notice anything except weight loss.

The diagnosis of hyperthyroidism can be confirmed by running a simple blood test to determine your cat's thyroid hormone level. Additional blood tests should be performed to screen for other health problems that might be present in older cats and might influence treatment choice and prognosis.

Hyperthyroidism is a progressive disease. Symptoms, if untreated, will continue to worsen until the pet eventually dies from complications of the disease. The treatment options discussed below offer advantages and disadvantages, which must be considered for each cat and its owner.

TREATMENT OPTIONS:

MEDICATION. These can be used to control the signs of hyperthyroidism and do a great job but do not cure the disease or destroy the growing tumor affecting their thyroid gland. Choices consist of a small pill given twice a day or a transdermal medical cream that can be rubbed on your pet's ear two times a day orally two times a day to control symptoms.

RADIATION TREATMENT. This is a great treatment option for a cure for your cat. One injection of Radioiodine (I-131) is absorbed into the thyroid tumor and cures 98-99% of cats. Very few side effects are ever reported.

SURGERY TREATMENT

Thyroidectomy can be performed, but may be more risky and invasive to your pet. There is a risk with anesthesia and there is a risk of accidentally removing the small parathyroid glands or other neighboring structures along with the thyroid gland, which can have an enormous and permanent affect on blood calcium levels.

FELINE INFECTIOUS PERITONITIS

Feline Infectious Peritonitis, often-abbreviated FIP, is a disease in the cat, which often affects the lining of the chest and/or abdomen. There is still a lot not known about this disease. It has been recognized since the 1960's and is much more complex than many of the other cat diseases. It is currently thought that FIP is the second biggest killer of cats, second only to Feline Leukemia.

The disease is definitely contagious from cat to cat, but we do not know exactly how it is spread. The virus may be shed in the saliva, urine, and feces of infected cats. Most infections are thought to occur through the mouth or nose. It is often seen later in other cats in a household once a positive case has been diagnosed.

Signs of FIP often develop very slowly over a period of months. Early signs are very vague and mimic other diseases. Loss of appetite, high fever, and labored breathing are often the first signs. As the disease progresses, signs include very difficult breathing, distended abdomen, weight loss, and emaciation. Death will eventually occur from suffocation caused by a buildup of fluid in the chest restricting the ability of the lungs to inflate with air.

There are **NO** known cures for **FIP** at this time. It is **FATAL!** Sometimes treatment is available that can provide temporary relief in some cats, however it does not reverse the course of the disease, and in the end treatment is not successful.

FELINE LEUKEMIA FACTS

Feline Leukemia is a highly contagious virus that causes immunodeficiency and neoplastic disease (cancer) in domestic cats. It is ultimately fatal in most cases. Approximately a 2-3% prevalence in the U.S.A. in the healthy cat population and as high as 30% in the stray cat population in some areas.

It is most likely to occur during the first 1-6 years of life. But disease can occur at any age. Onset of the clinical signs of the disease usually occur over a period of months to years after infection occurs. Your cat can appear healthy for a long period of time. It is spread by licking, sneezing, fighting, shared food bowls or sharing litter pans. What is called a "nose to nose" contact with saliva or other body fluids.

It is one of the major causes of death in cats today.

Diagnosis is made by clinical signs and a simple in-house blood test. This test may be repeated in 3-4 months to determine if your cat was able to mount an adequate immune

response during stage two of the disease and force the virus into latency. Clinical signs can be similar to human AIDS because of the disease's ability to impair the immune system and make it difficult to fight off illness/infection and cancer. Due to the seriousness of this disease, we highly recommend that all cats at risk are vaccinated. Cats at risk are indoor/outdoor cats, indoor cats that reside with cats that go outdoors and cats that have contact with other cats through boarding or through relatives where the FELV status of other cats is not certain. Once the disease is contracted there is NO cure!

HAIRBALLS IN CATS

Hairballs, which are spit up, are a common problem seen in cats. Accumulation of hair in the stomach of the cat is a direct result of the significant portion of the cat's life that is spent grooming it. It has been estimated that cats groom themselves for up to 1/3 of their waking hours.

The problem begins as the cat swallows the hair it has licked off during the cleaning process. The barb-like projections on the cat's tongue pull the hair loose from the skin and haircoat. These barbs point inward on the tongue, which causes the hair to remain lodged on the cat's tongue until it is swallowed.

Hair is mostly undigestible and therefore begins to knot up in the stomach. As the hairball enlarges, it is unable to pass out of the stomach down into the small intestine. It then becomes an irritant to the stomach lining eventually being vomited up in most cases. Should the hairball get so large that it cannot pass back up through the opening into the esophagus, it becomes a surgical procedure to get it out.

Signs of "hairballs" include vomiting, constipation, listlessness, and coughing. It frequently causes a loss of appetite and even depression. The regurgitated "hairball" is often not actually round in shape, but rather "tubular."

Finding regurgitated hairballs is a definite sign that your cat has a problem and needs help. Although rarely fatal, hairballs are an inconvenience to cleanup, very uncomfortable for the cat, and can lead to serious complications.

INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) is a frustrating chronic disease of the GI tract. It can occur in both dogs and cats. In most cases, the primary lesions are seen in the intestine resulting in diarrhea. However, some cases affect the stomach that results in chronic vomiting. Both the stomach and intestine may be affected in the same pet.

Clinical signs are usually vomiting and/or diarrhea. Most affected pets do not lose a significant amount of weight. Most eat well and otherwise appear normal.

An inflammatory immune system response is the usual cause of the problem. The actual cause of the inflammatory response is unknown. The lining of the affected portion of the GI tract becomes infiltrated with inflammatory cells that interfere with the ability of the pet to digest and absorb nutrients. Food allergy or intolerance is sometimes thought to be the cause, but most cases result from an unidentifiable reason, referred to as an idiopathic cause.

A diagnosis is often suspected from the medical history and physical examination results. Sometimes the diagnosis is confirmed by trial treatment with drugs for this particular condition. However the particular drugs needed may vary for each pet requiring a trial series of several drugs to determine what will be appropriate for each individual pet. Often a prescription bland or hypoallergenic diet is included in the treatment recommendations. A definite diagnosis requires a biopsy of the affected part of the GI tract but is not a required part of diagnosis to begin treatment in a pet suspected of this disorder.

THERE IS NO CURE FOR THIS CONDITION:

However it **CAN BE CONTROLLED** in most cases. Drug therapy may be required for the remaining life of the pet. Drug protocols may require alterations if the condition returns while on a particular therapeutic regimen.

UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION IN CATS

There are many causes of respiratory infections in the cat, both viral and bacterial.

Respiratory infections are usually viral and are often **HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS** to other cats. They may cause serious disease that can, sometimes, even result in death of the cat. Feline respiratory infections are thought to be spread primarily by carriers, which show no outward signs of disease. These are often animals that have recently had the disease and recovered.

Direct contact or indirect contact, such as hands, clothing, food bowls, etc may spread these diseases. Clinical signs are usually seen 3-7 days after exposure.

The most common clinical signs include fever, sneezing, watery eyes, nasal discharge, drooling, mouth ulcers, and loss of appetite, which is the result of the loss of smelling reflexes. Death is usually due to airway obstruction, dehydration, or malnutrition.

After recovery, the cat continues to shed the virus for several months, possibly infecting other cats. Recovered cats may soon be susceptible to re-infection unless appropriately vaccinated. Therefore all cats should be vaccinated as soon as possible after recovery.