

Feline Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)

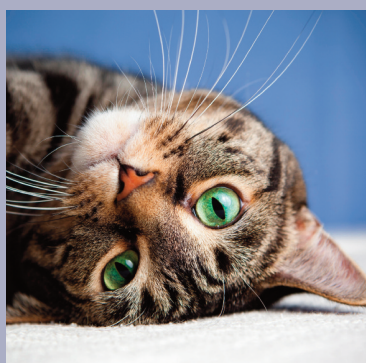
INFORMATION FOR CAT CAREGIVERS



Feline Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is a condition in which a cat's blood pressure is elevated above normal, safe levels. As cats age their risk of developing high blood pressure increases.

Signs and Symptoms of Hypertension

In both humans and cats, high blood pressure often has no signs or symptoms. This makes the condition very dangerous since it can go unnoticed. High blood pressure has harmful effects on the following four main body systems. When blood pressure is too high, damage to these systems occurs, but signs of damage are not always observed right away:



- **Heart:** trouble breathing, signs of stroke including dragging a limb or both hindlimbs, collapse
- **Brain:** unexplained changes in behavior including increased meowing and howling
- **Kidneys:** increased drinking, large urine clumps in the litter box, vomiting
- **Eyes (retinas):** Sudden blindness including bumping into furniture, missing jumps, walking along walls to help with direction

What Causes Hypertension in Cats

High blood pressure in cats can be related to a number of factors. Some cats with kidney disease will develop high blood pressure. This can occur because the kidneys play a role in controlling blood pressure. When the kidneys are damaged, the cat's blood pressure may increase. A number of other conditions, including heart disease and hyperthyroidism, can also contribute to high blood pressure in cats. In some cases, the cause cannot be identified and this is termed 'idiopathic hypertension.'

Testing for Feline Hypertension

It is extremely important to bring your cat for regular veterinary checkups because there are so many factors that can cause high blood pressure and your cat may not ever show any symptoms. At the check-up, the veterinary team will measure your cat's blood pressure which will help establish your cat's baseline blood pressure, monitor trends, and detect high blood pressure even if your cat is not showing signs. High blood pressure is diagnosed in cats much the same as it is in humans. A blood pressure cuff is placed on the cat's limb or tail, and the cuff is inflated and deflated. Blood pressure is determined using machines that measure the sound of blood flow through the blood vessels (Doppler) or the motion of the blood through the blood vessels (Oscillometry).

Treating Hypertension in Cats

There are effective treatments for controlling high blood pressure in cats. Medication to regulate your cat's blood pressure will need to be given each day. Your veterinarian will want to recheck your cat shortly after starting medication to ensure the right dose is being used. Your cat will most likely need to be given daily medication for the rest of his life. Once your cat's blood pressure is under control, your veterinarian will recommend checking blood pressure every three to six months to make sure it stays stable.



For more information, visit
catfriendly.com/hypertension.



Feline Hypertension

COMMON CAT CAREGIVER QUESTIONS



What causes high blood pressure in cats?

There are a number of diseases that can cause high blood pressure in cats, such as kidney disease, hyperthyroidism, and heart disease. There are some uncommon diseases and medications that can cause high blood pressure in cats as well. There is also a term called “idiopathic hypertension” which is used to describe cases where no underlying cause has been identified. Additionally, some cats will experience



temporary elevations in blood pressure when they are stressed, but their blood pressure is normal the rest of the time. These cats are said to have “situational hypertension.”

What are some of the signs of feline hypertension I can look out for?

Noticeable signs of high blood pressure often relate to damage in the kidneys, eyes, brain, and heart. A few common signs of feline hypertension include:

- Trouble breathing
- Unexplained changes in behavior
- Increased drinking
- Evidence of blindness (e.g., bumping into furniture, missing jumps)

The Cat Friendly Homes *Feline Hypertension* webpage (catfriendly.com/hypertension) describes these signs. Some cats will not show any signs. Routine veterinary visits are critical because having your cat's blood pressure checked as part of their routine wellness checkup will help establish your cat's baseline blood pressure, monitor trends, and detect high blood pressure even if your cat is not showing signs.

What is involved with screening a cat for feline hypertension?

Blood pressure is determined using a device that either measures the sound of blood flow through the blood vessels (Doppler) or the motion of the blood through the blood vessels (Oscillometry). Blood pressure is measured in cats very much like it is measured in humans. However, smaller blood pressure cuffs are used as well as different sites for cuff placement, including the tail.

My cat was diagnosed with high blood pressure. How can I help my cat?

A diagnosis of feline hypertension means your cat may need to be given medication to lower their blood pressure for the rest of their life. Blood pressure medications for cats are administered once to twice a day. The Cat Friendly Homes *Giving Your Cat Medication* webpage (catfriendly.com/giving-cat-medication) has tips for administering oral medications with links to videos demonstrating how to give a cat medication in both pill and liquid form. Be sure to schedule the follow-up visits that your veterinarian recommends. When first diagnosed, your veterinarian will want to see your cat more often to make sure he is responding to treatment and his blood pressure is coming under control. Afterwards you can expect to have your cat's blood pressure checked about every 3-6 months.

How can I help keep my cat calm when his blood pressure is checked in order to help reduce false elevated readings from stress?

Your cat's veterinary visit begins at home. The best way to reduce stress prior to the visit is to help your cat become comfortable and familiar with the carrier. This can help keep your cat calm prior to arriving in the veterinary practice. The Cat Friendly Homes *Getting Your Cat to The Veterinarian* website (catfriendly.com/getting-cat-veterinarian) provides helpful tips and a video about helping your cat learn to associate the carrier with a positive experience, and getting an unwilling cat into the carrier.

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