

Kidney or renal failure



CATS PROTECTION
VETERINARY GUIDES



The kidneys are responsible for filtering waste products out of the blood to form urine. Disease of the kidneys is one of the most common problems affecting middle-aged and older cats. Unfortunately, damage to the kidneys is irreversible and they tend to deteriorate over time.

Kidney disease is broadly divided into two types:

Chronic kidney disease

This is the most common type and refers to a gradual-onset, long-term disease of the kidneys. The damage caused is usually due to the natural ageing process and is often seen in cats over seven years of age. Other factors which may also have an influence on this disease are inherited defects (especially in certain breeds of pedigree cats), infections, viral diseases, cancerous growths and urinary stones.

Acute kidney disease

This refers to sudden damage to the kidney or kidneys and is usually as a result of trauma, poisoning, infections or blockages caused by lower urinary tract disease. Signs can be sudden and severe and unless urgent treatment is given, the condition can rapidly become fatal. In spite of treatment, a cat with acute kidney disease may then go on to suffer from chronic kidney disease.

What happens if the kidneys do not work properly?

If the kidneys are not working properly, it can have a number of effects on the cat, such as:

- a build-up of waste toxins that damage other body tissues
- high blood pressure
- a loss of essential minerals and excess fluid in the urine
- anaemia

What are the signs of kidney disease?

Most cats do not show signs of chronic kidney disease until 75 per cent of the kidneys have been damaged. Signs can vary between individuals but the most common signs are:

- increased thirst
- passing more urine
- poor appetite
- weight loss
- poor coat condition
- vomiting
- lethargy
- depression
- bad breath

How is it diagnosed?

Your vet will test your cat's blood and urine for high levels of waste products that would normally be kept within safe levels by healthy kidneys.

Many vets will try to diagnose kidney disease in its early stages, before clinical signs develop, by offering cat owners the option of blood tests for older cats at routine check-ups or vaccinations. By doing this, early treatment may significantly extend an affected cat's life expectancy.

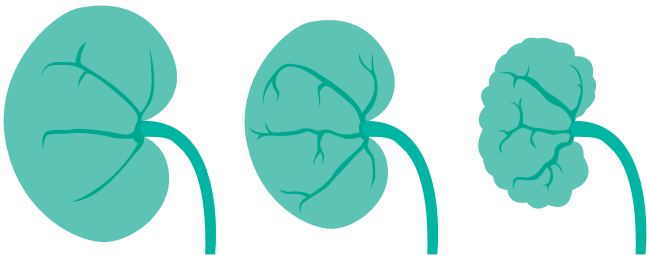
How is it treated?

Treatment depends on the stage of kidney failure your cat is in, the signs shown and impact of the condition on other body systems.

Treatment may include:

Fluid therapy

If your cat becomes very dehydrated, the vet may administer extra fluids to help replace lost salts and water. This can take several days and requires hospitalisation.



Medication

Your cat may be prescribed medication such as:

- long-term oral medication to increase the blood supply to the kidneys and to lower the blood pressure, which appears to slow the progression of the disease in some cases
- medication for specific problems associated with kidney disease, such as vomiting or mouth ulcers
- long-acting injections to stimulate appetite and slow weight loss

Diet

Your vet may prescribe a specific diet that limits further kidney damage and reduces the workload on your cat's kidneys by decreasing production of waste products in the blood.

Following his initial treatment for renal disease, your cat is likely to be prescribed a diet and medication for the rest of his life. You will have to carefully observe your cat for any changes in his eating, drinking and urinating. Regular check-ups with your vet and further blood and urine tests will be beneficial to monitor progression of the disease.

What does the future hold?

Depending on the severity of the kidney damage, with regular monitoring, correct medication and treatment, many cats with kidney disease can go on to lead long and happy lives. Sadly, however, the condition will deteriorate over time.

This leaflet is one of a range provided by Cats Protection on issues surrounding cat care.

Cats Protection is the UK's leading feline welfare charity and helps more than 193,000 cats and kittens each year. We rely entirely on public generosity to finance this vital welfare work.

For more information on **adopting a cat**, **volunteering for us** or **making a donation**, visit **www.cats.org.uk**



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