

Hypertension



CATS PROTECTION
VETERINARY GUIDES



In cats, high blood pressure (known as hypertension) usually occurs as a result of another underlying disease, such as kidney disease, heart disease or hyperthyroidism. It can also occur as the primary problem.

What are the signs?

The organs most vulnerable to the effects of high blood pressure are the eyes, kidneys, heart and brain. Initially, there may be very few signs of high blood pressure, particularly if it is the primary problem. However, the signs sometimes occur very suddenly.

Signs include:

- blindness
- changes inside the eye, including bleeding
- disorientation
- seizures

If left untreated, these signs can become permanent so seek veterinary advice as soon as possible. If the hypertension is caused by another underlying condition, the signs will relate to that disease.

How is it diagnosed?

A thorough clinical examination can identify the signs of hypertension. Your cat's blood pressure can be measured using a cuff device applied to the leg or tail. Repeated measurements are normally taken over a period of time, so a short stay at the clinic may be necessary. Your vet may also want to check for the other diseases associated with hypertension, so blood and urine tests may be necessary.

How is it treated?

If possible, your cat should be treated for any underlying conditions first. However, due to the possible severe consequences of high blood pressure, it may be necessary to start medication immediately. In some cases, such as with hyperthyroidism, if the underlying disease is successfully treated, the hypertension will resolve itself. However, for other underlying conditions, such as kidney or heart disease, long-term treatment is often needed for both this and the hypertension.

The most common treatment for hypertension is oral drugs and there are several available. It is important that your cat's blood pressure is regularly monitored to allow any necessary adjustments to medication and to detect any progression of the condition. Medication may be needed for life.

Sometimes, reducing the amount of dietary sodium (salt) may help reduce blood pressure. Specific diets containing lower amounts of sodium are available from your vet. You should avoid feeding your cat any other food which may contain additional sodium, such as tuna in brine or cat treats. Dietary management alone will not be sufficient in cats with high levels of hypertension.

What does the future hold?

Many cats can go on to lead relatively normal lives following diagnosis and stabilisation of hypertension, but this will depend on the type and severity of any underlying disease.

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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