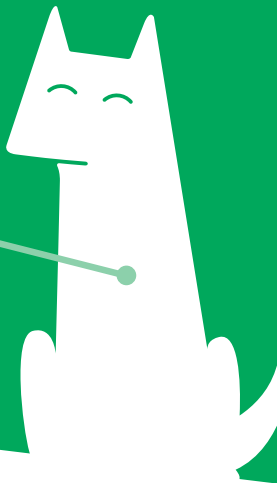


# Hypertension



**CATS PROTECTION**  
**VETERINARY GUIDE 8**



In cats, high blood pressure – known as hypertension – usually occurs as a result of another underlying disease. For example, cats suffering from kidney disease or hyperthyroidism often have some degree of hypertension as well. It can also occur as a primary problem in itself.

## 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 but sometimes the signs can 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 to stop the stress (white coat) effect that will increase all cats' blood pressure when they come into a vet clinic. 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 your cat has an underlying condition, this should be treated first. However, due to the potentially 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, treatment is often needed long-term for both this and the hypertension.

The most common treatment for hypertension is oral drugs – 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 that contain 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 very high blood pressure.

## 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. If left untreated, signs such as blindness may be irreversible.

### Learn more about your cat online!

Take a look at our free interactive tool to help you understand cats' origins and their behaviour within our homes.

<http://learnonline.cats.org.uk/content/ufo>

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