



Caring for your senior cat

There are many changes associated with age and therefore our senior companions require some special attention. Cats are regarded as “senior” from 8 years old and we should be monitoring them carefully for any signs of deteriorating health.

Common health problems associated with increasing age are:

Chronic kidney disease, dental disease, arthritis, hyperthyroidism (over active thyroid gland), high blood pressure, cancer and diabetes.

Symptoms can include excessive thirst, reduced or increased appetite, disorientation, weight loss, vomiting, diarrhoea and poor coat condition.

Some general points to consider:

- There is often an increased water requirement due to reduced kidney function so loss of appetite may put elderly cats at serious risk of dehydration. A wet diet may be preferable and providing multiple water bowls, and sometimes a drinking fountain will encourage water intake. A senior food will be easier to digest and if your cat is diagnosed with kidney disease then a prescription kidney food will be the best way of maintaining kidney function
- Loss of muscle tone can result in an inability to run, jump and climb, reducing activity and therefore causing stiffness of joints. Signs of arthritis in cats can be subtle and whilst some cats will vocalise or try to bite or scratch when handled, others may become more withdrawn or just be reluctant to jump up or down. “Steps” up to a cat’s favourite chair or sofa can be helpful and providing an easily accessible, large, shallow litter tray could prevent unwanted accidents in the house. Relocating your cat’s bed to a draught free position and/or providing an extra microwavable heat source eg Snuggle safe or radiator bed for an elderly cat may help to reduce joint stiffness
- Teeth problems are common and in addition reduced sense of taste and smell can result in loss of appetite. Warming food may encourage your cat to eat more
- Reduced vision and hearing can result in an easily startled cat and care should be taken to minimise changes within the home environment. High blood pressure may be the cause of sudden deterioration in sight
- Deterioration in bowel function can lead to reduced absorption of nutrients and weight loss and elderly cats may be more prone to constipation.
- Poor coat condition may be the result of the inability to groom due to arthritis or a painful mouth or secondary to underlying disease eg hyperthyroidism. Elderly cats often need help with grooming and special attention should be given to their nails which can start to grow into the pads and result in pain and infection Often there are multiple problems which can complicate diagnosis so early recognition of signs and prompt treatment could make a big difference to the quality and length of your cat’s life.

Park Veterinary Centre



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Our current recommendations for routine health monitoring:

For cats 8-10 years old

we recommend an annual vet examination (usually done as part of your cat's routine vaccination), blood pressure measurement and analysis of a urine sample as a quick check of kidney function, urinary tract infection and diabetes

For cats 11-14 years old

we recommend a urine test and blood pressure measurement every 6 months and would discuss whether a senior blood profile is advisable at the annual vet examination.

Cats 15+ years old

would benefit from 6 monthly vet examinations, blood pressure measurement, urine testing and at least an annual senior blood profile.

Subsidised senior health check consultations

- on Wednesday and Thursday mornings at the main surgery at Cassiobury, and on Tuesday afternoons at our branch surgery at Katherine Place, Leavesden
- include: an examination by a vet, urine tests and a blood pressure measurement
- senior blood screen at reduced cost (vet will discuss whether blood test appropriate depending on the examination and/or any changes in appetite, thirst, weight etc.)

If considering booking a consultation you may wish to bring a urine sample with you and you might consider not feeding your cat on the morning of the appointment if you think a blood test may be suggested. Please ask at reception for any further information you may require.

How old is my cat?

Age of Cat	Human Equivalent	Age of Cat	Human Equivalent
1	15	11	60
2	24	12	64
3	28	13	68
4	32	14	72
5	36	15	76
6	40	16	80
7	44	17	84
8	48	18	88
9	52	19	92
10	56	20	96

Above courtesy of FAB 2009