

Does My Senior Cat Really Need Lab Work?

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Have you ever wondered why your veterinarian recommends getting screening lab work for your senior cat? If you answered yes, you are not alone. Many people question whether these screening tests are necessary. If I had to guess, most of our cat patients are also wondering why they have to get poked. The fact of the matter is that screening lab work is important for your cat's health for a number of reasons.

Cats can't talk

When you or I get sick, we can tell our doctors what ails us. We can tell them when our symptoms began. We can describe what we are experiencing and how bad we feel. In addition, we can answer our doctors' questions to help them make the right diagnosis. Unfortunately, our cats can't talk. Like pediatricians, [veterinarians](#) must rely on the "pet parent" to find out what is wrong with their patient. Even the most observant pet parent can only provide so much useful information to the veterinarian. Lab work helps the veterinarian obtain information that their patients can't share.

Cats are masters at hiding illness

To make matters worse, cats are great at hiding illness. For example, cats with [early diabetes](#) may show no symptoms at all, or may exhibit a subtle increase in their water consumption and urination. Unless you are actively measuring your cat's water input or [noting how often your cat is using the litter box](#) (by counting the number of clumps of [urine](#)), you are likely to miss these early symptoms. It is only when diabetes becomes more advanced that the more obvious signs of diabetes, such as [weight loss](#), [change in appetite](#), [lethargy](#) and [marked increases in water consumption](#) and urination develop. The same principles apply to other common [diseases](#) in [senior cats](#), such as [chronic kidney disease](#) and [hyperthyroid disease](#).

[Dr. Paul: How an Early Diabetes Diagnosis Saved My Cat >>>](#)

Lab work lets your veterinarian detect diseases early

Screening diagnostic tests allow your veterinarian to examine organ function and unmask illnesses that may not be detectable to the naked eye. The earlier diseases are diagnosed, the better the odds are that your cat can be treated successfully. Waiting until your cat becomes ill and shows obvious signs and symptoms of their disease is not ideal. More advanced disease is associated with more complications and it can make treatment harder and more costly.

There is so much you and your veterinarian can learn from your cat's [blood](#) and [urine](#) tests. Routine screening tests can help your veterinarian keep track of your senior cat's health and can identify and uncover potential medical issues. Remember, the earlier most diseases are detected and treatment started, the better the prognosis. Screening lab work is a simple tool you and your veterinarian can use to effectively manage your senior cat's health.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.