Monitoring for Potential Health Problems in Your Cat

Preventive care not only helps to detect disease in its early stages, when it is most likely to respond to treatment, but it also can help you avoid significant medical expense and risk to your pet’s health.

Routine preventive care also helps your veterinarian establish normal baseline laboratory values when your pet is young and healthy. Even subtle changes from baseline values can help identify disease as your pet ages, long before they become apparent to you or your veterinarian.

For more information about preventive care, talk to your veterinarian—your best resource for information about the health and well-being of your pet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organ/System</th>
<th>Potential Health Risks</th>
<th>Possible Result If Left Untreated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teeth and mouth</td>
<td>Gingivitis, periodontal disease, oral cancer</td>
<td>Oral pain, tooth abscesses, tooth loss, systemic infection, cancer progression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nose and throat</td>
<td>Inflammation/infection, bleeding, tumors</td>
<td>Progression of local infection, systemic infection, breathing difficulty, nosebleeds, cancer progression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver and gallbladder</td>
<td>Inflammatory liver disease, reaction to certain drugs and toxic substances, cancer, stases of the gallbladder and bile ducts</td>
<td>Jaundice, liver failure, anemia, bleeding disorders, neurologic signs, cancer progression, death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kidneys</td>
<td>Acute and chronic kidney diseases, kidney stones, kidney infection, cancer</td>
<td>Irreversible kidney damage, kidney failure, high blood pressure, blindness, anemia, death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heart and lungs</td>
<td>Heart muscle disease, leaky heart valves, irregular heart rhythms, heartworm disease, bronchitis, pneumonia</td>
<td>Poor circulation, fluid buildup in lungs and/or belly, congestive heart failure, pneumonia, sudden death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glands/endocrine system</td>
<td>Diabetes, thyroid disease, adrenal disease</td>
<td>Cataracts, blindness, wasting, hair/coat changes, hair loss, excessive thirst/urination, skin infections, collapse, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes and vision</td>
<td>Corneal ulcers, cataracts, dry eye, glaucoma, deformation and/or infection of eyelids</td>
<td>Pain, progressive blindness, loss of eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digestive/gastrointestinal system</td>
<td>Intestinal parasites, intestinal blockage, other intestinal infections, inflammatory bowel disease, colitis, pancreatitis, cancer</td>
<td>Malnutrition (inability to absorb nutrients from food), wasting, chronic diarrhea, gas, abdominal pain, cancer progression, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>Allergies, fleas, mites, ticks, lumps, skin infections, ear infections</td>
<td>Hair loss, foul odor, vector-borne infections, worsening infections, hearing loss, cancer progression, death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Preventive Care for Your Feline Friend

Your pet’s health changes with age, just as yours does. But our pets age much faster than we do. Do you know how old your cat is relative to you, or in “people years?” Use the chart (at left), based on your cat’s age and weight, to find out!

Regardless of your pet’s age, you play a key role in helping him combat illness and remain as healthy as possible. Remember, your cat cannot describe symptoms to you, but he will show you signs of disease or illness. Awareness of the signs of the most common diseases is one way to help reduce your pet’s risk. It’s a little scary to consider that 10% of pets that appear healthy to their owners and veterinarians during their annual visits have underlying diseases.¹

The 10 Signs Your Cat May Be Sick Are:

1. Bad breath or drooling
2. Excessive drinking or urination
3. Appetite change associated with weight loss or gain
4. Change in activity level (lack of interest in doing things they once did)
5. Stiffness, difficulty getting up, or trouble climbing stairs
6. Sleeping more than usual or other behavior and attitude changes
7. Coughing, sneezing, excessive panting, or labored breathing
8. Dry or itchy skin, sores, lumps, or shaking of the head
9. Frequent digestive upsets or change in bowel movements
10. Dry, red, or cloudy eyes

Preventive Care May Include:

- **Chemistry tests** to screen for kidney, liver, and pancreatic disease, as well as to check sugar levels
- **Complete blood count (CBC)** to rule out blood-related conditions
- **Electrolyte tests** to ensure your cat isn’t dehydrated or suffering from an electrolyte imbalance
- **Infectious disease screening** to test for feline leukemia (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV)
- **Heartworm test** to screen for feline heartworm disease
- **Fecal tests** to rule out intestinal parasites
- **Urine tests** to screen for urinary tract infections and other diseases, and to evaluate the kidneys’ ability to concentrate urine
- **Thyroid test** to determine if the thyroid gland is producing too much thyroid hormone
- **Cardiac tests** to rule out heart-related issues
- **Electrocardiogram (ECG)** to screen for an abnormal heart rhythm, which may indicate underlying heart disease

The Color Key:

- **Adult**
- **Senior**
- **Geriatric**

Chart courtesy of Fred L. Metzger, DVM, DABVP

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