

Understand the Cat Aging Process

As cats age, their bodies change. Here are some common changes to expect and warning signs to look for.

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The cat aging process happens at different rates and different ways depending on genetics and health care. Your cat will change in appearance, metabolism and organ function. Here's a look from head to toe.

1. The ability to see, taste, smell and hear declines.
2. Eyes may appear cloudy and, in very old cats, the irises take on a lacy look as they atrophy.
3. Tartar build-up on teeth commonly leads to dental problems.
4. Muscles atrophy, muscle tone and strength decreases. This may give your cat a flabbier appearance.
5. Bone and joint strength decline and arthritis inflammation of joints can become a problem.
6. Weight gain or loss, depending on the disease, may occur. The spine and hips could protrude with weight loss.
7. The coat thins and can become matted, flaky or oily because your cat grooms less often. Graying is less common in cats than dogs.
8. The body's metabolic rate declines.
9. Wounds heal more slowly and the body is less resistant to disease.
10. Organ function becomes less efficient, especially the kidneys.
11. Constipation may occur because of an aging, less motile digestive system.
12. Nails often require more frequent trimming as your cat becomes less active.