

## Common Health Problems of Older Cats

**As cats age, they become more susceptible to disease. Keep an eye out for these symptoms.**

*Cherie Langlois*

Keep this list handy. If you notice your cat exhibiting any of the symptoms, contact your veterinarian. Chronic Kidney Disease. Symptoms include increased thirst and urination, weight loss, reduced activity, appetite loss, vomiting, hypertension, anemia and dehydration. The disease is incurable but can be managed with special diets, extra fluids and medications. Kidney transplants have been performed in extreme cases. Dental Disease. Symptoms include bad breath, appetite and weight loss, drooling, and tartar buildup on teeth. Treatment is regular teeth cleaning. Hyperthyroidism. Symptoms include increased appetite and thirst, weight loss, vomiting, diarrhea, hypertension, and hyperactivity. Treatment involves lifelong medication, radioiodine therapy or surgery to remove affected thyroid lobes. Arthritis. Symptoms include stiffness, decrease in activity, lameness and posture changes. Check with your veterinarian about appropriate medications to relieve pain and inflammation. Cancer (Neoplasia). Symptoms include abnormal swellings or lumps, weight loss, appetite loss, vomiting, bowel changes, breathing difficulties, bleeding or discharge from body openings. Treatment involves removal of tumor and/or chemotherapy. Diabetes. Symptoms include increased thirst and appetite, weight loss and increased urine output. Some cats can get by with oral medication, but the majority require daily insulin shots. Treatment also involves dietary management. Megacolon (enlarged colon). Symptoms include constipation and straining. Treatment involves a feline-specific enema given by your veterinarian, dietary management, medication and sometimes surgery. Heart/Circulatory Disorders. Symptoms include lack of energy, appetite loss, resting flat on breastbone, panting and paralysis of rear limbs. Treatment involves medication and dietary management.