



FELINE HYPERTENSION

Hypertension is the medical term for high blood pressure, that is now recognised as a common condition of middle-aged and older cats. Feline hypertension is often found as a complication of other underlying medical conditions (“secondary hypertension”) – most frequently Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) and Hyperthyroidism - although primary hypertension (without any underlying disease) can also occur in cats.

EFFECTS OF HYPERTENSION

Hypertension is damaging to the body and can cause damage to several key body organs (known as **Target Organ Damage** or **TOD**). These organs include the **EYES, KIDNEYS, HEART, BRAIN & CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM**.

As there are no visible outward signs of hypertension, it is often termed a “*silent killer*”, and may remain undetected for a long period of time before symptoms suddenly appear with severe consequences.

Most healthy cats will have a normal blood pressure between **80 and 150 mmHg**. A cat is considered to be hypertensive if their blood pressure is persistently **above 160 mmHg**.

1 IN 8 CATS OVER 9 YEARS OLD SUFFERS FROM HYPERTENSION!

EYES

Hypertension can cause bleeding into the eyes, and retinal changes such as swelling and detachment can occur, resulting in damage to the cat’s vision and possible blindness. In some cases, the bleeding can be seen in the front chamber of the eye without the need for special equipment. It is estimated that **40-70% of hypertensive cats** will have retinal damage.

KIDNEYS

Hypertension damages the kidneys over time, and can increase the risk of kidney failure developing. High blood pressure will likely cause any pre-existing kidney disease to become significantly worse over time.

HEART

Over time, hypertension causes the muscle of the left ventricle of the heart to become thickened, as the heart has to work harder to pump the blood. This can lead to congestive heart failure, and affected cats may show signs of breathlessness and lethargy.

BRAIN & CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM

Hypertension can cause bleeding into the brain resulting in neurological signs such as odd behaviour, a wobbly or drunken gait, seizures, dementia and coma.

If you have any questions about your pets, call us on 01325 620968 or ask a member of our team



Stanhope Park Veterinary Hospital

DIAGNOSIS OF HYPERTENSION

As hypertension is more common in older cats, annual blood pressure checks are recommended in cats from **7 years of age**, to enable early diagnosis of disease, ideally included as part of the routine clinical examination. As cats get older, blood pressure checks should ideally be carried out a minimum of twice yearly.

Cats diagnosed with **Chronic Kidney Disease, Hyperthyroidism, Heart Disease, Diabetes Mellitus, sudden onset blindness, or other neurological signs**, should also have their blood pressure carefully assessed.

There are various techniques and equipment available to monitor blood pressure in cats, but the most common technique is very similar to that routinely used in people, with an inflatable cuff placed around a front leg or the tail base. Measuring blood pressure is quick and completely painless, and very well tolerated by the majority of cats, but a little patience is required to allow the cat to be calm and relaxed to avoid so-called "**white coat hypertension**" – high blood pressure in the face of a stressful situation.

A detailed eye examination is also essential given that retinal damage is common in hypertensive cats. Abnormalities are usually detected in both eyes, though they may be more severe in one.

MANAGEMENT OF HYPERTENSION

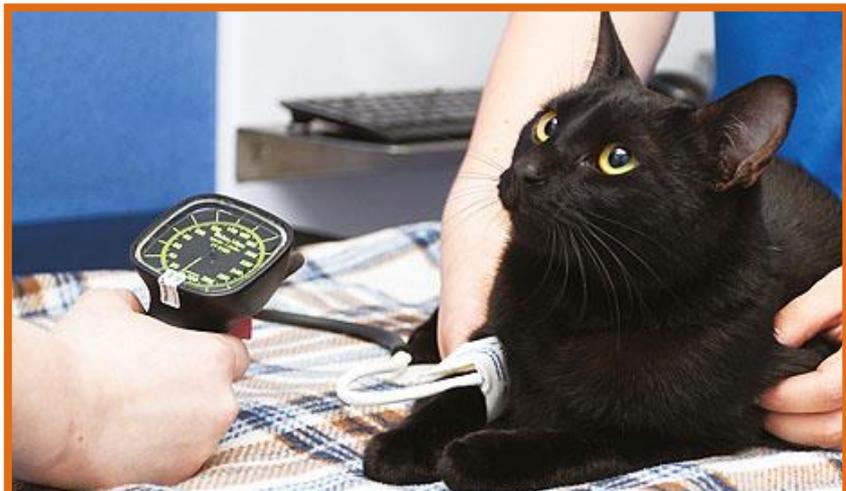
Management of hypertension has two broad aims:

- To reduce blood pressure using **anti-hypertensive medication** such as **AMLODIPINE** or **TELMISARTAN**.
- To look for an underlying disease which has caused the hypertension, such as hyperthyroidism. Investigations often include analysis of blood and urine samples, and treatment of underlying disease may actually resolve the hypertension.

Response to therapy should be monitored by repeat blood pressure measurements, and monitoring of any ocular abnormalities. Patients with underlying disease will also need regular monitoring of the specific disease, such as repeat blood profiles.

For cats with Primary Hypertension, it is usually possible to successfully manage the condition and prevent future complications such as retinal damage and other target organ damage.

In cases of secondary hypertension, the long-term prognosis is very dependent on the nature and severity of the underlying disease.



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