

# Monitoring Your Senior Cat for Signs of Disease

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As your cat ages, the likelihood she will develop various changes in the function of her body systems increases. Some of these will be normal changes due to the aging process, others may be indicative of disease. To be more easily alerted to possible signs of disease early in the disease process:



- Groom, check and clip nails, look for any lumps, bumps, or non-healing sores; are there any abnormal odors, any change in size of abdomen, or increased hair loss?
- Monitor behavior: is there a change in sleep patterns, tendency to be around people, easily startled, sleeping in an abnormal or unusual position?
- Monitor activity and mobility: is there a difficulty with stairs, bumping into things, sudden collapses, [seizures](#), any loss of balance, any lameness or change in gait?
- Look for any changes in respiration: is there noticeable coughing, panting, or sneezing?
- Provide home dental care: [brush your cat's teeth](#), regularly examine the inside of her mouth; is there excessive drooling, any sores, bad breath, are the gums swollen, yellow, light pink, or purplish?
- Monitor food consumption: how much is being eaten, what type of food is being eaten (e.g.; does your cat leave the hard kibble and only eat the canned?), any difficulty eating or swallowing, any vomiting?
- Monitor water consumption: drinking more than usual or less than usual?
- Monitor urination and defecation: note color, amount, consistency, and frequency of stool; note color and amount of urine; any signs of pain while urinating or defecating, any inappropriate elimination (urinating or defecating outside of the litter box)?
- Measure weight every 2 months using a mail or baby scale, or the scale at your veterinarian's office
- Monitor environmental temperature and the temperature at which your cat seems most comfortable
- Schedule regular appointments with your veterinarian



Some of the more common signs indicative of diseases are shown in the table below. Remember, just because your cat has a sign of a disease, does not necessarily mean she has the disease. What it does mean, is that your cat should be examined by your veterinarian, so a proper diagnosis can be made.

| Signs and Symptoms of Common Diseases in Older Cats | Associated Diseases  |
|---|--|
| Behavior Changes                                    | Pain associated with <a href="#">arthritis</a> or other conditions<br>Loss of sight or hearing<br>Liver disease<br><a href="#">Hepatic lipidosis</a><br>Kidney disease |
| Weakness or exercise intolerance                    | Heart disease<br>Anemia<br><a href="#">Obesity</a><br>Cancer   |

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Changes in activity level      | <a href="#">Hyperthyroidism</a><br><a href="#">Arthritis</a><br>Pain<br><a href="#">Obesity</a><br>Anemia<br>Heart disease<br><a href="#">Diabetes mellitus</a><br>Kidney disease<br>Liver disease<br><a href="#">Hepatic lipidosis</a><br>Cancer            |
| Weight gain                    | <a href="#">Obesity</a>  |
| Weight loss                    | Cancer<br>Kidney disease<br>Liver disease<br>Gastrointestinal disease<br>Decreased food consumption<br><a href="#">Hyperthyroidism</a><br><a href="#">Hepatic lipidosis</a><br><a href="#">Dental disease</a><br>Heart disease<br>Inflammatory bowel disease |
| Coughing                       | Asthma<br>Other respiratory disease<br>Cancer  |
| Increased thirst and urination | Diabetes mellitus<br>Liver disease<br>Kidney disease<br><a href="#">Hyperthyroidism</a>  |
| Vomiting                       | Kidney disease<br>Liver disease<br>Gastrointestinal disease<br><a href="#">Inflammatory bowel disease</a><br><a href="#">Hyperthyroidism</a>   |
| Diarrhea                       | Gastrointestinal disease<br>Sudden changes in diet<br><a href="#">Inflammatory bowel disease</a><br>Kidney disease<br>Liver disease<br>Inflammatory bowel disease  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Seizures                                       | <a href="#">Epilepsy</a><br>Cancer<br>Liver disease<br>Kidney disease   |
| Bad breath                                     | <a href="#">Dental disease</a><br>Oral cancer<br>Kidney disease   |
| Lameness, difficulty rising, change in gait    | <a href="#">Arthritis</a><br><a href="#">Obesity</a><br>Diabetes mellitus   |
| Urinary incontinence/inappropriate elimination | Kidney disease<br>Pain from arthritis<br><a href="#">Inflammatory bowel disease</a><br>Bladder stones<br>Cancer<br>Senility   |
| Lumps, bumps                                   | Cancer<br>Benign tumors   |
| Appetite changes                               | Diabetes mellitus<br>Cancer<br>Liver disease<br>Kidney disease<br>Stress<br>Pain<br>Reaction to medication(s)<br><a href="#">Dental or oral disease</a><br><a href="#">Hyperthyroidism</a><br><a href="#">Hepatic lipidosis</a> |