



What is chronic kidney disease? This is a common disease in older pets, mainly in cats, in which their kidneys don't function as well because of normal changes due to aging.

What signs will I see in my pet? The first sign many pet owners see is an increase in drinking and peeing. Your pet might need to pee more often and go in abnormal places like outside the litter box or other places around the house. For more severe cases, pets will have a decreased appetite, vomiting, and weight loss.

How can I help my pet? We diagnose kidney disease with a blood sample, a urine sample, and blood pressure. These tests together can give us an idea of how severe the disease is and the best forms of treatment. There are several different ways to treat chronic kidney disease.

- **Diet:** This is the cornerstone of treating chronic kidney disease. Prescription diets are created to have the right amount of protein and electrolytes to protect the kidneys and slow down the progression of kidney disease. Many cats can be finicky about what they eat so a very slow transition from your pet's old food to their new prescription diet is important. We can find something for almost all pets as there are many different flavors and forms!
- **Medications:** Medications are chosen based on your pet specifically and can be different from pet to pet.
 - **B vitamins:** These are typically given as weekly or monthly injections under the fur.
 - **Appetite stimulants:** As many pets aren't as hungry with chronic kidney disease, we will give appetite stimulants to make sure they are eating enough to maintain or increase their weight.
 - **Iron injections:** The kidneys are a big part of the body's red blood cell production. When the kidneys don't function properly we frequently see a low red blood cell level (anemia). Iron injections can increase red blood cell levels and give your pet more energy.
 - **Anti-nausea medications:** Along with a decreased appetite, pets may feel nauseous because of built up toxins that their kidneys cannot get rid of. If your pet is vomiting we will give them this medication.
 - **Fluids:** The more hydrated your pet is the better they will feel and better their kidneys will work. Some owners will learn how to give fluids under the fur at home.
 - **Antibiotics:** Pets with chronic kidney disease can get urinary tract infections. Based on a urine sample this medicine may be prescribed for your pet.
 - **Blood pressure medications:** Just like your pet's red blood cell level, their kidneys are in charge of blood pressure. If your pet's blood pressure is high we will add this into their treatment plan.
- **At Home Care:** We want our pets to be as hydrated as possible with kidney disease. For some pets, adding a water fountain will encourage them to drink more. As they drink more or receive extra fluids this will mean they pee more. For cats it can be helpful to have more litter boxes in the house and for dogs more frequent walks may be needed.

What happens after I start to treat my pet? It is important to watch your pet closely at home, as much of the follow up care is based on how your pet is feeling. Watch their drinking, peeing, appetite, vomiting, and activity level. Depending on your pet's condition we will continue to look at blood and urine samples as well as blood pressure. Your pet's condition can change over time so we may need to change their treatment plan over time. While we cannot reverse kidney disease, we can slow down the progression of the disease. Many pets with kidney disease can live happy and healthy lives for years.