



Chronic Condition Care: Thyroid Disease

Thyroid disease – or hyperthyroidism -- occurs when excess thyroxin (a chemical in the thyroid gland) speeds up a cat's metabolism. This usually occurs due to the presence of a tumor on one or both thyroid glands. **Thyroid tumors are typically benign**, with only 2 to 3% found to be malignant.

Your cat may have thyroid disease if you observe any of the following:

- Increase in appetite, accompanied by weight loss
- Vomiting right after meals
- Bald spots or patches of coarse fur
- Oily skin and acne, especially in the chin area
- A foul-smelling liquid stool
- Restlessness / insomnia

Often, some symptoms of thyroid disease are mistaken for signs of old age, so tests are essential in determining what is ailing your cat. Along with thyroid disease, your veterinarian may also find that your cat has an increased heart rate, accumulation of fluid in the chest, respiratory symptoms and kidney problems, all of which can accompany thyroid disease.

A number of cats with thyroid disease also have hypertension or high blood pressure. An overproduction of thyroid hormone, which elevates the cat's metabolic rate, causes the heart to beat faster and more forcefully. This increased pumping pressure and greater output of blood into the arteries sometimes causes a rise in blood pressure. [Read about Hypertension.](#)

Treatment is often medication alone

Cats with thyroid disease are given an anti-thyroid medication to control symptoms and keep kitty comfortable. Medication, given once or twice a day, will not eliminate a tumor, but will treat the symptoms. Follow up exams will be important to monitor your kitty's condition. Medication can sometimes produce side effects such as vomiting and lethargy. [Surgery](#) is recommended only if one of the thyroid glands has to be removed. Some cats benefit from an injection of *radioactive iodine*.