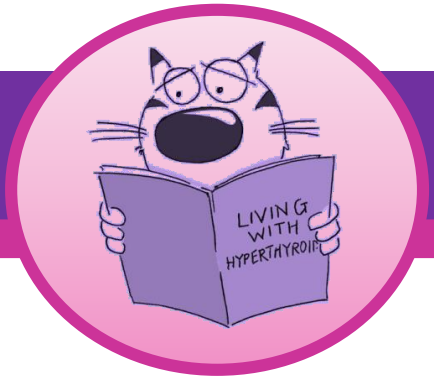
Hyperthyroidism



What is Hyperthyroidism?

Hyperthyroidism is one of the most common endocrine disorders of cats over the age of 10, along with diabetes.

Hyperthyroidism is due to an excessive amount of thyroid hormone (usually T_4) being produced in the thyroid gland, secondary to a benign tumor (adenoma). An increase in thyroid hormones causes an increase in the metabolic rate of the body which puts stress on the heart, kidneys, nervous system, gastrointestinal tract, liver, as well as all other organs of the body.

What are the symptoms of Hyperthyroidism?

Every organ system is under the negative influence of an abnormal increase in the body's metabolism, and therefore symptoms are extremely varied. Symptoms include:

- Weight loss (fat and muscle)
- Increased appetite
- Increased activity level
- Increased drinking and urination
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Increased heart rate and respiratory rate - may lead to heart disease
- Increased blood pressure
- Restlessness or meowing at night time/confusion or abnormal behaviors
- Haircoat/skin/nail abnormalities

Possible causes of hyperthyroidism include higher levels of iodine in cat foods. As well, PBDEs which are fire retardant chemicals and can be found in some fish based foods, soy, and BPA (found in the coating of some cans).

How is Hyperthyroidism diagnosed?

Hyperthyroidism may be diagnosed on a physical examination, followed by a blood test. The blood test checks your cats TOTAL T_4. All cats over the age of 10, should have this test completed annually.

Treatment of Hyperthyroidism

There are 4 treatment options for hyperthyroidism:
1) Radioactive iodine (I-131) - the '**gold standard**'

2) Anti-thyroid medication (e.g. methimazole), which is administered usually twice daily, for life and requires frequent blood monitoring to monitor kidney and bone marrow function.

3) Surgical removal of the thryoid gland

4) Diet: Hill's y/d (a diet deficient in iodine - canned and dry) - must be the sole diet fed to your cat in order to be effective. Regular monitoring of T_4 is required to ensure that the diet is being effective.