

RENAL FAILURE IN CATS



Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is a common condition in older cats, where the kidneys gradually lose their ability to function properly. While CKD cannot be cured, early detection and appropriate management can significantly improve your cat's quality of life and longevity.

What is Chronic Renal Failure (CRF)?

CKD occurs when a cat's kidneys become damaged over time, leading to a decline in their ability to filter waste and maintain fluid balance. This condition is progressive and more common in cats over 10 years old. The exact cause is often unknown, but factors such as aging, infections, and inherited conditions can contribute. Occasionally more specific issues, such as kidney cysts or tumours can be the underlying cause of kidney disease.



Signs to watch out for

- Increased thirst and urination.
- Weight loss.
- Reduced appetite
- Lethargy or depression
- Vomiting
- Poor coat condition
- Muscle weakness



How is Chronic Renal Failure diagnosed?

Diagnosis involves a combination of tests:

- Blood and urine tests to assess kidney function
- Blood pressure measurement to check for high blood pressure
- Sometimes imaging, such as ultrasound, to look at kidney size and structure

These tests help determine how advanced the CKD is and guide treatment decisions.

How is Chronic Renal Failure treated?

While there is no cure, you can do several things at home to help your cat feel better and slow the disease down:

Dietary Changes

Cats with CKD benefit from special diets made to reduce the burden on their kidneys. These diets are lower in phosphorus and sodium, contain high-quality protein, and are often supplemented with potassium and omega-3 fatty acids. We would initially recommend starting a [Royal Canin Renal diet](#) (these come in wet and dry versions) which takes all these nutritional considerations into account. If your cat won't eat the new food, your vet may suggest trying a different make of food or adding supplements to their usual meals.

Encouraging Hydration

CKD can lead to dehydration. It's important to help your cat stay hydrated by:

- Ideally offering wet (tinned) food instead of dry food
- Providing fresh water in multiple places around your home
- Trying a cat water fountain to encourage drinking
- Making stocks or bone broths to encourage drinking (care not to add salt or any onion or garlic derivatives)

Medications

Your vet might prescribe medications depending on your cat's condition. These can include:

- Phosphate binders if your cat's phosphorus levels are too high, especially useful in cats who reject renal diets
- Potassium supplements
- Drugs to control high blood pressure
- Medications to reduce nausea or boost appetite

Regular check-ups will help adjust treatments as needed and monitor progress.

Long term outlook

CKD is a lifelong condition that typically gets worse over time. However, with the right care, many cats continue to live happy and comfortable lives for months or even years after diagnosis. The key is early diagnosis, good nutrition, regular monitoring, and tailored treatment.

Further Reading

[International Cat Care Website](#)