

LIVER DISEASE

The liver is the largest gland in the body. It is located in the abdominal cavity and lies just in front of the stomach next to the diaphragm. The liver is the body's "detoxifier." All of the blood circulates through the liver to be filtered and cleaned before returning to the heart. Liver disease can present itself very quickly or can occur very slowly over many months.

CAUSES of liver disease include infections, consumption or exposure to poisons, abnormal blood flow (usually a birth defect), and hereditary disorders. Cats can also develop liver disease from just not eating for a few days, regardless of the cause of the poor appetite. Liver disease can result in inflammation of the liver, bile stones, decreased production of enzymes aiding digestion, and cirrhosis.

SIGNS of Liver Disease:

- Loss of appetite
- Depression
- Vomiting
- Jaundice (yellowish discoloration of the lips or eyes)
- Increased thirst
- Discoloration of the urine or stool
- Bloating of the abdomen due to fluid build-up
- Bruises on the gums or belly due to poor blood clotting ability

DIAGNOSIS of the specific type of liver disease is confirmed by physical examination, blood tests, ultrasound testing, radiographs (x-rays), and sometimes biopsy.

TREATMENT OF LIVER DISEASE:

The liver has a tremendous ability to regenerate and heal. Prescription diets are an important component of successful treatment. Prescription diets contain specific nutrients most easily digested minimizing the work-load on the diseased liver while allowing for optimum nutrition to aid the healing process. Many pets with liver disease will recover and live normal lives. Your pet's treatment may include:

- Antibiotics to prevent or eliminate bacterial infection.
- Medications to help prevent a build-up of fatty deposits in the liver.
- Steroids or other anti-inflammatory drugs to counteract severe inflammation of the liver.
- IV fluids and nutritional supplementation in advanced cases.
- Pain medications.
- Anti-nausea drugs for vomiting and cramping.
- Drugs to decrease the acid secretion into the stomach causing vomiting.
- DIET: Feed several small meals/day instead of 1-2 larger meals. Table scraps should be avoided for the rest of the pet's life.
- Notify the clinic if your pet appears to worsen in any way, or if vomiting continues for more than 24 hours.