

**CARING for YOUR SENIOR CAT
GLENDALE ANIMAL HOSPITAL
623-934-7243 www.familyvet.com**

When Is My Cat a “Senior?”

Thanks to advances in nutrition and veterinary medicine, cats are living longer than ever before. Still, like humans, older cats are more likely to have health problems than are younger pets. Generally speaking, a cat 8 years of age or older qualifies as a senior. Our chart below will help you most accurately determine your cat’s relative age in “human years.”

Cat’s Age	Human Age
5	36
6	40
7	44
8	48
9	52
10	56
11	60
12	64
13	68
14	72*
15	76*
16	80*
17	84*
18	88*
19	92*

* denotes geriatric cats

Signs of Aging

Some signs of aging like a gray muzzle or slowed activity are easy to identify. Other signs are more subtle and hard to spot.

Remember that being old is not a disease, but that there are common changes and certain age-related diseases that can compromise your cat’s health. These can include:

- Decreased activity
- Less interaction with family
- Increased sleeping
- Disorientation or confusion
- Less responsive when spoken to
- Weight gain or loss
- Changes in skin or muscles
- Changes in appetite or thirst
- Loss of litter box training
- Increased urination
- Stiffness or lameness
- Vision or hearing loss
- Dental problems
- Digestive problems
- Recurrent infections

It is important to remember that changes you may be noticing in appearance or behavior can often be a sign that something is medically wrong, so please don’t just assume that your cat is suffering from “old age” and cannot be helped. Modern advances in veterinary medicine offer many exciting options to enhance the lives of senior and geriatric cats.

An Ounce of Prevention

Most veterinarians believe that older cats have different medical needs and will benefit from specialized services, testing and dietary changes. This is why it is a good idea and important to establish a baseline that can be used as a benchmark for measuring changes *before* medical problems even begin to arise. We have specific recommendations and a kitty evaluation test on the other side of this handout to help you make the best decisions for your older companions. Our goal here at the Glendale Animal Hospital is to help your best-friends stay with you as long and as comfortably as possible.

Screening Procedures for Senior Cats

Just as certain health screenings become necessary for people as they age, we offer and advise specific tests to ensure that your cat is healthy—or to catch problems in their earliest stages when they are most easily treatable. These procedures are common and we offer **special pricing** as part of our senior pet packages. Please note that not every test or procedure may be appropriate or necessary for your pet.

- **Physical examination** to check your cat’s general appearance, vital signs, weight, heart, lungs, eyes, ears, mouth, teeth, internal organs and skin. Usually advised twice yearly for senior cats, more often if specific problems are identified.
- **Complete blood count** which helps to diagnose cancer, infections, anemia and bleeding problems. It also gives us an assessment as to the status of your cat’s immune system function.
- **Serum chemistry profile** is used to assess major organ function including liver, kidney and pancreatic functions. Blood proteins, blood sugar and electrolytes are also evaluated using this test.
- **Thyroid screening** is extremely important in older cats to evaluate metabolic rate.
- **Complete urinalysis** which screens for diabetes, kidney disease and infections.
- **Fecal analysis** that can identify parasitism or dysfunctions of the digestive tract.
- **Other tests** which may include X-rays, an EKG and so forth may also be advised based on your individual cat’s needs.

SIGNS	yes	no
Difficulty climbing stairs		
Difficulty jumping		
Increased stiffness or lameness		
Loss of litter box training		
Increased thirst		
Increased urination		
Changes in activity level		
Excessive panting		
Circling/Repetitive movements		
Confusion or disorientation		
Excessive meowing/howling		
Less interaction with family		
Decreased responsiveness		
Tremors or shaking		
Skin or haircoat changes		
Changes in sleeping patterns		
Less enthusiasm when greeting		
Altered appetite		
Weight change		
Lumps or bumps		

Ninety-one percent of veterinarians in a recent survey stated that they would be more likely to detect problems in senior pets early, while they were most treatable, if their owners would bring their pet to the vet more than just once a year.

The simple chart to the left will help you assess if there are any potential problems with your senior pet. A yes answer should be discussed with us at your next visit. Also, be sure that we discuss proper nutrition for your pet. Weight control and dietary changes specific to your pet are very important.

Common Health Problems of Older Cats

- **Periodontal disease** is the most common problem of senior cats and can lead to kidney, liver and heart problems.
- **Obesity** increases your cat’s risk of diabetes and liver disease and can lead to serious arthritis and back problems.
- **Endocrine diseases** including diabetes and high thyroid can have very profound effects on all major body systems.
- **Kidney and liver disease** can lead to serious chemical imbalances, anemia, poor immunity, bleeding and altered mental function. Kidney disease is a major problem in older cats.
- **Heart disease** can lead to weakness, difficulty breathing, fatigue and an inability to exercise. Cats get several forms of heart disease.
- **Arthritis and spinal diseases** are very common and cause pain, lameness and altered bowel and bladder function.
- **Loss of vision and hearing** are quite common.
- **Cancers and tumors** are very common but over 80% may be curable if caught and treated early.