



Dr. Kim's feline mews



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HOW CAN MY CAT HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

It is only fairly recently that vets have been able to measure feline Blood Pressure (BP). Cat's arteries are small, and the blood flow through them is not audible with a stethoscope (like humans), so measuring feline BP had to wait for the development of Doppler Crystal Probes to be invented. These identify the movement of the arterial walls and convert it to sound, so NOW we can 'hear' when blood flow resumes in the artery after the paediatric inflating cuff is released. Hence BP can be identified.

Until recently, we thought that cat BP only rose to dangerous levels once their kidneys were already damaged. However, it appears there is a subset of cats who get high BP BEFORE the kidney damage. Since management of BP is one of the best ways to prolong kidney function, then managing it before any damage is discernible should mean we have cats' kidneys lasting a very long time. Excellent news!

Finding out if your cat has hypertension is now pretty easy with a routine Blood Pressure measurement, especially if your cat is over the age of 8 years or has renal insufficiency - kidney damage. However, sometimes the first clue is due to the effects of high BP on other systems - cats can develop heart murmurs, retinas (in the eye) can detach so the cat goes blind. Or cats can have strokes or fits from high BP. Eventually, untreated, there will be enough damage to the kidneys that they will lose function. So treatment is important.

Here is the BUT: treatment requires once or even twice daily medication for your cat - for as long as it lives. Hypertension (high BP) does not go away. It is worse to treat BP intermittently rather than not at all, so starting on medication

is a big commitment. There are a number of approaches - if your cat has hypertension, she will, of course, require her own customised plan! There are tablets - which need to be divided to 1/8 or 1/4 (Amlodipine / Norvasc (T)), or the same drug can be made into an ointment and rubbed inside the ear (transdermal cream). Or you can ignore the problem until there is a clinical issue, and then treat the hypertension. Some cats don't want to ever be treated, or the financial burden can be high. It is possible just to treat the kidney issues with change of diet once the damage is done, and still extend the useful life of kidneys.



So in summary: each cat is different, high blood pressure (now we can measure it and cats are living long enough to develop it!) is quite common. Information is worth having, whether treatment is elected or not.

So next time you see Dr Kim - ask whether your cat needs a BP check. It may keep your cat with you, and enjoying a high quality of life, for a much longer time! or book now **0400 756 331**.

Great Website, with all the right information : www.pets.ca/encyclopedia/hypertension_cats.htm