

Liver Disease

Hepatic lipidosis (“fatty liver”) occurs when excessive amounts of fat are deposited in the liver. This is the most common liver disease in cats. This can occur in cats of any age, breed, or sex. Obesity is one common risk factor.

Signs of hepatic lipidosis are weight loss, lethargy, vomiting, and yellowing of the skin. When a cat has not eaten for over one week, these signs may begin to occur.

The liver works to remove toxins from the body and metabolize drugs as well as producing clotting factors and blood proteins. Hepatic lipidosis occurs when a cat does not eat for a week or more. This causes mobilization of fat stores in the body to be deposited in the liver and decreases its ability to function properly.

Any stressor can cause a cat to stop eating. These include new pets, changes in routine, moving, diet changes, and illness. There are many underlying illnesses that can cause hepatic lipidosis; these include diabetes mellitus, pancreatitis, gastrointestinal disease, and stress. Any disease can cause a poor appetite. About 50% of the time no underlying cause can be found.

Aggressive medical treatment is needed, as there is a high fatality rate if intervention is not taken. With aggressive treatment, 50-65% of cats can survive.

Treatments range from hospitalization, fluid therapy, nutritional support, treating any known underlying disease, and antibiotics/medications. Nutritional support is key to treating this disease. Appetite stimulants can be tried if early detection occurs. Attempting to force-feed is possible early in the disease process only. This can cause stress, which can lead to further loss of appetite. If a cat cannot be enticed to eat, a feeding tube will be recommended.

Keeping your cat at a healthy weight is the best prevention of hepatic lipidosis.



Cat Clinic of NE Seattle
1539 1/2 Northeast 145th St.
Seattle, WA. 98155