



ABOUT THE DISEASE

Hyperthyroidism is caused by an overactive thyroid gland secreting excessive thyroid hormones.

A common disease seen in adult and geriatric feline patients, it is often the result of an over functioning benign thyroid tumor. Only 1-2% of cases are malignant thyroid tumors.

Untreated *hyperthyroidism* causes gradual emaciation (severe weight loss), ravenous hunger, hyperactivity, extreme irritability, and in some circumstances aggressiveness.

In more advanced cases, patients will develop heart and kidney disease, but may remain without symptoms until patients begin treatment for *hyperthyroidism*.

Please see the [Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy](#) and [Renal Disease](#) documents for additional information on heart disease related to *hyperthyroidism*.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

In most cases, feline patients are diagnosed using a simple in-house thyroid hormone (T4) test.

In cases where concurrent disease may be present, some feline patients will appear borderline abnormal on in-house testing. In these circumstances, veterinarians will often send out an entire thyroid panel, which will diagnose more definitively.

Prior to treatment and following the initiation of treatment, patients will have blood and urine screening tests to determine any other underlying condition(s).

TREATMENT

Feline patients that are treated have a relatively good long-term success with near-normal quality of life.

Most commonly, patients are treated with [methimazole](#), which is effective in management. This medication can be found in tablet form, or compounded into a liquid or an ointment.

Alternatively, some patients undergo radioactive iodine therapy to eliminate overactive thyroid tissues.

In some circumstances, treatment can unravel heart and kidney disease that may not have shown symptoms. If problems occur related to treatment, they usually happen within the first 3 months of treatment. Sometimes patients are managed similar to congestive heart failure patients to minimize side effects. Please see the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) document for additional information.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- *Hyperthyroidism* is a lifelong condition that only improves with treatment and can cause life-threatening disease.
- Once treatment has started, monitor for the first weeks for any changes in behavior, appetite, or activity.
- With the potential for secondary heart and kidney disease, follow up testing should not be taken lightly.