

HYPERTENSION IN CATS

High blood pressure is a newly recognized condition in cats. It is thought that psychological stress may be a contributing factor just as in humans.

SIGNS OF THE CONDITION. Blood pressure is not as easy to measure in cats as in people. For that reason, most cases are not recognized early. The most common clinical sign on presentation is SUDDEN BLINDNESS. High blood pressure causes the retina to detach. The clinical sign most often seen is *widely dilated pupils that do not constrict when exposed to bright light.*

CAUSES OF THE CONDITION. Heart disease and kidney failure are the major causes of hypertension in cats. Both causes are a result of aging. As the cat gets older, the kidneys begin to wear out making it harder for the blood to filter through. This causes a backup of blood into the arteries and an increase in blood pressure. Cardiomyopathy is a condition resulting in a thickening of the heart muscle making it pump blood harder thereby raising blood pressure.

HYPERTHYROIDISM is a condition frequently seen in older cats, which can also cause hypertension.

Blood pressure checks are important in all cats with heart disease, kidney failure, and hyperthyroidism.

TREATMENT is available if the condition is caught early enough. Once the retina has been detached for 24-48 hours, blindness is permanent. For long-term success in treating this condition, it is important to determine and treat the underlying cause as well as the hypertension itself.