



# KIDNEY HEALTH FOR CATS

## Symptoms

- Increased drinking & urination
- Poor appetite, nausea
- Lethargy
- Lack of self-grooming
- Weight loss
- High blood pressure
- Dehydration
- Diarrhea
- Mouth ulcers

## Product Suggestions

- Weruva Wx formulas: lowest phosphorus canned foods.
- My Perfect Pet Low Phosphorus Chicken Formula
- Low Phosphorus Canned Foods for early to moderate kidney disease: (mg/100kcal)  
**Cats In The Kitchen:** Chick Magnet (157)  
**Weruva Stew:** Goody Stew Shoes (132), Stew's Clues (137), What a Crock (132), Simmer Down (135)  
**BFF Play:** Checkmate, Topsy Turvey, Cherish, Tiptoe  
**TruLux:** Steak Frites (118)
- Raw Goat Milk
- AminAvast
- Herbsmith Kidney Care
- Animal Essentials Senior Support
- Animal Essentials Plant Enzymes & Probiotics
- Herbsmith Milk Thistle Seed
- Nordic Naturals Omega-3

### What Are The Symptoms Of Chronic Kidney Disease?

The list at the left is short but significant. By the time you see these symptoms the problem could be advanced, with a 65% loss of kidney function; you should have your cat seen by a vet immediately for a thorough exam, including blood and urine analysis.

### What Are The Causes of Kidney Disease?

Causes include: genetic or congenital abnormalities, urinary tract obstructions, diabetes, poisons, trauma, infections (including Lyme, Leptospirosis, FIV, FIP, FeLV, and untreated bladder infections) and a dry food diet. In older cats it's often difficult to know the exact cause. Onset in older cats is usually gradual, though not inevitable, so preventative care is important, especially annual blood tests to determine changes early.

### The Stages of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

This progressive disease is divided into four stages. Staging is done by your vet according to blood and urine tests (and others) and should always take into account *multiple* indicators from those tests (SDMA, creatinine, UPC, BUN, phosphorus, blood pressure, RBC, ultrasound). Because the SDMA test can catch very early anomalies it's very helpful, but other tests need to be taken into consideration when staging the disease so diet and supplement decisions can be adjusted appropriately. It's important to have your vet explain their staging decision and the test results it's based on. Always get a copy of the results and have them highlight the significant tests.

### Diet & Early Stage Kidney Disease (Stage 1 & 2)

Contrary to popular belief, low protein diets are not appropriate for early or mid stage kidney disease in cats. In fact, it may be harmful. Because it is considered a progressive disease, a cat's decline may be mistakenly blamed on the disease alone, rather than the high carbohydrate, low-protein diet they have been prescribed. According to Dr. Judy Morgan, protein restriction should not be considered until Stage 3 or 4 (with a BUN over 150). Sodium is not a concern because it is not high in pet food, though treats should be checked for high sodium. You may be able to slow down or even stop the progression of disease with the right diet and supplements.

### Skip The Dry Food!

No matter what the cause or the severity of disease, dry food should be eliminated from the diet. Cats are hardwired to get their moisture from their food, they simply don't have the thirst mechanism to drink enough water to offset the effects of dry food. Many cats that eat only dry food are chronically dehydrated, with overly-concentrated urine and improper pH. This predisposes them to kidney failure, bladder infections, and bladder stones. The protein in dry food is also much harder for their system to process, including at the kidneys. A high-moisture diet is a must with kidney disease, and there are many options: canned, freeze-dried diets designed to be re-hydrated, lightly cooked commercial diets, balanced home-cooked recipes, and raw food.



## Learn More

### Check out these books:

- *Dr. Pitcairn's Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats*
- *Whole Health for Happy Cats*
- *Your Cat*

### Online Resources:

- [feline-nutrition.org](http://feline-nutrition.org)
- [littlebigcat.com](http://littlebigcat.com)
- [drjudymorgan.com](http://drjudymorgan.com)  
She generously shares her knowledge, some of which we've used in this guide. She has a blog post: *Diagnosing and Treating Kidney Disease*, as well as downloadable information and recipes.

### Related Pet Health Guides:

- [Why Wet Food for Cats](#)
- [Switching Cats to New Foods](#)
- [How To Use Supplements](#)

**If your cat has been diagnosed with kidney problems it's important to have regular check-ups to monitor their kidney function.**



### Cats Need (High Quality) Protein

It's important to provide high-quality (i.e. highly digestible) protein, which means animal sources like meat and eggs that are not heavily processed. Restricting protein too much or too early can lead to an overall weakened state that is more vulnerable to infection or other diseases, and often results in avoidable muscle-wasting. If your cat is on a raw diet your vet needs to know that these cats naturally show *slightly* elevated BUN.

### Low Phosphorus

While end-stage CKD may require low protein, low phosphorus is important to pay attention to for all cats with CKD. Your vet can provide phosphorus binders to add to the food if needed. Cats on raw food should be fed calcium derived from eggshell or kelp instead of bones which are higher in phosphorus. In later stages of disease they benefit from eating more tripe, which is low in phosphorus. We carry some low-phosphorus canned diets, and a low-phosphorus lightly-cooked diet from My Perfect Pet.

### Ease & Improve Digestion

Digestive enzymes help the animals more easily and thoroughly digest protein, starches, and fats. This results in less strain on the kidneys, as well as helping to reduce inflammation.

### Add Omega-3 Fats

Omega-3 fats are critical for pets with CKD. They need moderate to high amounts of fat to provide them with energy that does not tax the kidneys, and so they are less reliant on protein that is reduced in the diet in late-stage disease. Studies have shown that omega-3s from fish oil helps slow the progression of kidney disease and significantly extend life expectancy. Don't rely on fats within a packaged diet to be sufficient, rather add EPA/DHA Omega-3s in the form of fish oil.

### Support The Liver

If the kidneys aren't working well it's especially important to support liver function. Dandelion and Milk Thistle are very safe herbs to use. Milk thistle seed, the most important herb for the liver, supports and repairs the liver *and* supports the kidneys too. Dandelion root is high in potassium which can become depleted with excessive urination.

### Supplements for Kidney Disease

Supplements to support the kidneys should be started as soon as you get a diagnosis, even as early as Stage 1. The primary ones we recommend specifically for kidney disease are AminAvast and Herbsmith Kidney Care. We also have complementary supplements for bladder health, immune support, and antioxidants.

### The Cat Won't Eat!

One of the side-effects of CKD is loss of appetite, but they must maintain their weight. Pets with CKD need very appetizing foods, and benefit from smaller meals fed more frequently. Low protein foods are usually rejected by cats, so if your cat is required to restrict protein due to advanced disease then you need to get creative by adding stews, broths, and toppings. These "picky" cats can definitely become protein deficient if they are eating very little on a protein-restricted diet, and this can harm other body functions.

### Don't Discount The Effects of Emotional Stress On Kidney Issues

Flower Essences, Reiki, and other methods of stress reduction are an important part of treating chronic kidney & bladder issues. They also benefit from treatments like acupressure and acupuncture.