










Common Medical Conditions in Senior Pets

Health Category	Examples of Common Senior Diseases	Prevalence	Signs	If Left Untreated	Your Veterinarian May Recommend
 Dental	periodontal disease, gingivitis, cancer	85% of dogs and cats over 6 years of age ¹	bad breath, redness in gums, swollen gums, mass	heart disease, tooth loss, kidney and liver disorder, systemic infection, cancer progression	oral exam, preanesthetic bloodwork,* x-rays, bic urinalysis
 Liver	inflammatory, degenerative and cancerous liver disease	common in older dogs, less common in cats; probably underestimated ² — data in process	decreased appetite, weight loss, vomiting, diarrhea, increased thirst/urination	hypoalbuminemia, lipid metabolism disturbance, anemia, bleeding disorders, liver failure	physical exam, bloodwork x-rays, ultrasound, bio urinalysis
 Kidney	kidney failure, kidney stones, kidney infection, kidney insufficiency	10% of dogs over age 12; 1% of all pets ³	increased thirst/urination, decreased appetite, weight loss, vomiting, diarrhea, back pain	progression to kidney failure, heart disease, electrolyte upsets, fluid balance disturbance, death	physical exam, bloody x-rays, ultrasound, urine culture, urine protein:creatinine ratio
 Heart and Lungs	cardiac disease, pneumonia, bronchitis, emphysema	6.7% of all dogs ⁴ , data in process for cats	decreased stamina, coughing, difficulty breathing, weight loss, pot belly	progression to renal and liver disease, poor vascular perfusion, eventual death	chest x-rays, ECG, blood pressure, baseli bloodwork,* ultrasoun urinalysis
 Joints	arthritis, hip dysplasia, back disease	20% of adult dogs; lower in cats ⁵	lameness, reluctance to walk or exercise, decreased appetite, discomfort/pain	progressive disease, reduced mobility, neurologic deficits	physical examination, bloodwork* (especially medications), Lyme test x-rays, urinalysis, joint
 Endocrine System	diabetes mellitus, hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism, hypoadrenocorticism, hyperadrenocorticism	3% of cats and dogs; higher in older pets ⁶	noticeable weight change, increased appetite without weight gain, vomiting, increased water consumption, frequent urination, change in energy level	heart failure, kidney failure, secondary metabolic disease	bloodwork,* specific endocrine profile, urin.
 Cancer	cancers of the skin, spleen, liver, lymphoid tissue, etc.	50% of pets over the age of 10 ⁷	bleeding, lumps, irritated skin, identified mass, swollen lymph nodes, vomiting, diarrhea	can progress to organ failure or death	bloodwork,* physical cytology, biopsy, urine
 Ocular	cataracts, dry eye, glaucoma	many ocular diseases are inherited; often develops after 8 years of age ⁸	gray, bluish hue at the center of the eye; rubbing; pressing head against objects; swelling; redness; irritation; tearing	difficulty seeing, corneal ulceration, can progress to blindness, loss of eye	ocular exam, baseline bloodwork,* urinalysis
 Gastrointestinal System	inflammatory bowel disease, pancreatitis, cancer, colitis	common among all cats and dogs; data in process	vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, fluid gain	further weight loss, disease will progress to potential death	bloodwork,* physical urinalysis, x-ray, ultras endoscopy, biopsy

* Bloodwork includes complete blood count and full biochemistry profile.

1. Richman J. Dental disease and your pet. Available at: <http://www.vin.com>. Accessed February 4, 2003.

2. Mainland T. Caring for pets with liver disease. Available at: <http://www.petz.co.uk/vetontheweb/new/articles3.html>. Accessed December 16, 2004.

3. Davern D, Lund EM, Armstrong PJ, Kirk CA, Kolter LM, Kilmer JS. Health status and population characteristics of dogs and cats examined at a private veterinary

Beginning at around age 7, your pet enters his or her senior years. Often, pets begin to develop diseases common to their senior human counterparts, such as diabetes, heart disease, endocrine disease and cancer. These diseases can go unnoticed in their early stages; therefore, preventive health care is very important.

Early detection can help in disease prevention and can minimize suffering. If left undetected, many diseases can put your pet's health at risk. The best approach to caring for your senior pet includes preventive diagnostics such as:

- Establishing baseline bloodwork
- Identifying existing health problems
- Monitoring progress during treatment

Together, we can help your pet. You know your pet better than anyone else and can alert us to any changes in your pet before they become serious. We can help you understand the common medical conditions that your senior pet faces, and discuss a regular monitoring plan.

Watch for these signs.

Keep track and then report them to us immediately, before they become serious.

- Just not acting like himself/herself
- Interacting less often with family
- Responding less often or less enthusiastically
- Showing changes in behavior/activity level
- Having difficulty climbing stairs
- Having difficulty jumping
- Exhibiting increased stiffness or limping
- Drinking more often
- Urinating more often
- Changing eating patterns
- Noticeably gaining or losing weight
- Losing housetraining habits
- Changing sleeping patterns
- Becoming confused or disoriented
- Changing hair coat, skin, or new lumps or bumps
- Scratching more often
- Exhibiting bad breath/red or swollen gums
- Showing tremors or shaking
- Other _____

Your next appointment

Your pet is scheduled for a senior care visit on:

Date

age	weight			
	0-20	20-50	50-90	>90
1	7	7	8	9
2	13	14	16	18
3	20	21	24	26
4	26	27	31	34
5	33	34	38	41
6	40	42	45	49
7	44	47	50	56
8	48	51	55	64
9	52	56	61	71
10	56	60	66	78
11	60	65	72	86
12	64	69	77	93
13	68	74	82	101
14	72	78	88	108
15	76	83	93	115
16	80	87	99	123
17	84	92	104	131
18	88	96	109	139
19	92	101	115	
20	96	105	120	
21	100	109	126	
22	104	113	130	
23	108	117		
24	112	120		
25	116	124		

Charts courtesy of Fred L. Metzger, DVM, DABVP

