



HEPATIC LIPIDOSIS

The Job of the Liver

The liver is the metabolic center of the body. Its more than 100 functions are complex and critical. Without a liver none of us can live more than a few days. Some of the liver's duties include: detoxify the body; convert old hemoglobin into the bile salts which in turn activate the digestive enzymes in the small intestine; produce plasma proteins, including albumin, fibrinogen and prothrombin; convert fats into sugars and *vice versa*; produce uric acid and allantoin from protein wastes; metabolize carbohydrates; metabolize fats and produce cholesterol; and houses many critical enzymatic reactions involving vitamins and trace minerals.

What is Hepatic Lipidosis?

Hepatic lipidosis is the accumulation of fat (lipid) within the liver and is associated with bile stasis and liver dysfunction in cats, primarily obese middle-aged adults. The hallmark of hepatic lipidosis is anorexia (loss of appetite), which promotes lipid mobilization to the liver. The liver is unable to use this lipid, and liver dysfunction ensues as lipid accumulates. The mechanism for the inability to use the inflow of lipid is not fully understood.

How is Hepatitis Diagnosed?

The liver has the amazing ability to function normally with as little as 15-20% of its tissue, so almost the entire liver has to be involved before the animal is sick. Cats will have a loss of appetite as the most common sign. Also seen may be a weight loss, loss of muscle mass, icterus or jaundice (yellow skin), vomiting, and liver enlargement. Usually blood tests are needed before hepatic lipidosis is diagnosed. X-rays can be helpful if the liver is abnormally enlarged. Ultrasound examination likewise can be helpful. Liver biopsies are often indicated to confirm the diagnosis and differentiate it from other liver conditions. This can be done via an ultrasound guided needle.

How is It Treated?

Severely ill cats need to be managed as critical care patients and will require intravenous fluids and various medications. After stabilization, at-home

feeding and care can be continued with frequent hospital rechecks.

DIET

- Dietary therapy is the cornerstone of treatment for idiopathic hepatic lipidosis.
- A high-protein, high-calorie diet should be fed in amounts designed to meet the cat's energy needs. Prescription Diet a/d is often used for this purpose.
- For nearly all cats, this means feeding by stomach tube. Force-feeding is seldom sufficient to reverse the disease. So this requires the installation of a semipermanent stomach tube—various types may be used depending on the patient's condition.
- The client will be responsible for continuing the tube feeding for up to 6 weeks until the cat is eating voluntarily.
- Client commitment and training in how to administer the tube feeding is essential for success.

PATIENT MONITORING

- Affected cats should be monitored for weight gain or loss and hydration status. Dietary and fluid therapy is be altered if needed.
- Serum biochemistries should be monitored every 3-7 days initially. Improvement in abnormalities should be observed within 2-3 weeks after the start of treatment.
- Tube feeding should be continued until the cat eats voluntarily. The feeding tube can be removed 5-7 days after the cat eats normally.

EXPECTED COURSE AND PROGNOSIS

- With aggressive tube feeding, 60% of these cats survive.
- Without aggressive dietary therapy, 10% of them survive.
- It seldom recurs in cats that survive the disease.

Call Us If...

- You have trouble feeding through the stomach tube.
- You notice any degradation in your pet's general health.
- You have trouble giving the prescribed medicine.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve you!

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