

Ask the Vet



Elizabeth Eilers, DVM

Dr. Elizabeth Eilers is a Greensboro native and a 1999 graduate of NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine. She has been at the Cat Clinic since 2003 and became the owner in 2010.

Before moving back to Greensboro, Dr. Eilers practiced small animal and emergency medicine in Wilmington, NC and Southern California.

She enjoys getting to know her patients and their owners, and loves the challenge and fun of feline medicine. She and her husband Pat enjoy riding their bikes on the trails, and just about any sport on the water. They share their home with a minnow-hunting dog named Tsali and a lovable cat named Chuck Norris.

HYPERTENSION IN CATS

Did you know your cat can develop hypertension or high blood pressure? Hypertension, a disease that is seen more commonly in older cats, is also called “the silent killer” because there may not be any clinical signs until significant damage has occurred.

Hypertension can be a primary disease with no known underlying cause, but more commonly, it occurs secondary to other diseases such as kidney disease, hyperthyroidism or heart disease.

Q What are the clinical signs of hypertension?

A Because hypertension occurs frequently with other diseases, owners may notice more of the symptoms associated with those diseases. Many times there are no direct clinical signs of hypertension, but some cats become more vocal, especially at night. With advanced hypertension, cats may experience vision problems, including sudden blindness. Their pupils may appear dilated all the time, they may bump into things or they may be more reluctant to jump. Some owners report their cats just seem “off.” If left untreated, hypertension can lead to blindness, bleeding in the brain, seizures and organ failure.

Q How do you measure my cat’s blood pressure?

A There are several methods that can be used, but most commonly, we measure the systolic pressure using a pediatric cuff on the front leg or the tail. This is a painless, well-tolerated procedure and usually only takes a few minutes during your cat’s examination. It is important that your cat be relaxed during the procedure because their blood pressure can be affected by anxiety (similar to “white coat syndrome” in people). If your cat’s blood pressure is borderline or significantly high, we may repeat the measurements another time to see if the elevation is real or related to stress.

Q How is hypertension treated?

A Identifying the underlying cause is very important. Certain types of heart disease can cause high blood pressure. Blood work can

help determine if kidney disease or hyperthyroidism is present. Managing those diseases can help with the management of hypertension. The prognosis sometimes depends on the severity of the underlying disease. Medications are also prescribed to help lower your cat’s blood pressure and can be taken in pill form or compounded into chewables or liquids for ease of administration.

Are You Interested in Participating in a National Study for Cats with Hypertension?

The Cat Clinic of Greensboro is one of 35 study sites across the nation participating in a clinical trial for cats with a known history of kidney disease to determine if they have hypertension. Qualified participants will receive free study-related medical evaluations and diagnostic tests, medication (or placebo) and required monthly exams at no cost. In addition to free study-specific care, owners may receive compensation for their time and have funds credited to their account at their referring family veterinarian.

For more information or to find out if your cat could be a candidate for the study, please visit the website, www.MyCatCanHelp.com or call toll-free 855-254-3971.

See ad for Cat Clinic of Greensboro on page 7.