



## Your HYPERTHYROID Cat

### WHAT DOES HYPERTHYROID MEAN?

Hyperthyroid means overactive thyroid.

Your cat's thyroid glands regulate the speed at which your cat's body metabolism works. It does this by producing a hormone called thyroxine or T4 that regulates the speed of all body processes. When your cat produces too much of it and its metabolic rate soars, it has become hyperthyroid.

Hyperthyroidism is the most common hormone abnormality in older cats. Most cats diagnosed with hyperthyroidism are over 10 years old.

The thyroid is actually a pair of glands in cats. They are located on the underside of your cat's neck along its trachea (wind pipe).

Hyperthyroidism is  
a common, treatable  
disorder of older cats.

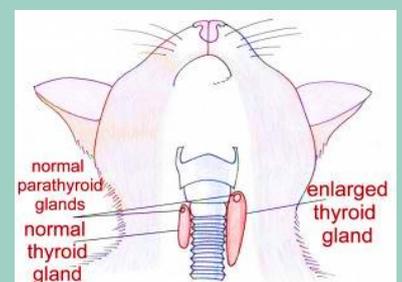
### WHAT DOES A CAT WITH HYPERTHYROIDISM LOOK LIKE?

Common signs of hyperthyroidism include:

- Poor hair coat quality
- Aggressive or "cranky" behaviour
- Weight loss
- Intermittent vomiting
- Increased appetite
- Increased production of feces or diarrhoea
- Patchy hair loss, failure to groom, or excessive grooming
- Increased water consumption
- Increased urine output
- Restlessness and/or nervousness
- Increased vocalization
- Increased respiratory rate
- Increased heart rate
- Heat avoidance

### HOW IS HYPERTHYROIDISM DIAGNOSED?

Hyperthyroidism is diagnosed following a simple blood test. A small sample is sent to the laboratory to measure the T4 level. Normal levels are between 20 - 40mmol/L. Any number above this is considered hyperthyroidism, and treatment is tailored around how much above normal levels your cat's T4 is, as well as any other symptoms. There may be concurrent disease which the vet may choose to test for also. The most common would be for renal (kidney) disease, another common disorder of older cats.



# TREATMENT OPTIONS

## DIET CHANGE

Hills y/d is a clinically proven prescription diet, produced under extremely strict conditions, to a formula that can help control the disease without medication. This diet comes in both dry biscuits and tinned food. This diet must be the only source of food for your cat (following transition from their old diet), as its effectiveness relies on strictly controlled levels of iodine.

## TABLETS

Once a day tablets are available. These tablets cannot be broken up - they must be given whole. The brand name is Vidalta. They come in 10mg or 15mg tablets.

## EAR GEL

Methimazole is a gel that comes in small syringes. You need to wear gloves and apply a small amount to the inner ear flap twice a day.

## RADIOACTIVE IODINE TREATMENT

Radioactive iodine therapy is considered the gold standard for the treatment of feline hyperthyroidism. Iodine is a primary component of thyroid hormones, and it is concentrated in the thyroid gland. Radioactive iodine destroys abnormal thyroid cells, and thus is an extremely effective treatment that cures hyperthyroidism relatively quickly.

- Radioactive Iodine treatment is currently available in Wellington and Palmerston North.
- Costs involved include treatment and boarding in specialised facilities for one to three weeks. If your cat comes home after the first week of treatment they will need special care at home for the next two weeks.

*Hyperthyroid treatment, using diet, tablets or ear gel, is for the rest of the cat's life. Radioactive iodine treatment is the only curative treatment advised.*

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- The initial cost for Radioactive Iodine therapy may seem high but because this option offers a permanent cure, and ongoing hyperthyroid treatment is not necessary, it is cost effective over time.
- It is possible to start on tablets or gel then elect to do radioactive iodine treatment in the future. Because the hyperthyroidism can disguise a renal issue, tablets or gel for 1-2 months can normalise the thyroid levels and allow us to assess renal function before going to radioactive iodine treatment.

## MONITORING

Blood tests are required to monitor your cat's T4 levels. This will let us know if the treatment is working and if dosages need to be altered.

How frequently you will need to bring your cat into the clinic for blood tests depends on what stage of treatment they're at. We would normally do an initial re-test one month after starting treatment, and then every three to six months if they're stable. We check/re-check urea and creatinine also to ensure the hyperthyroidism was not disguising a kidney problem.

Cats that are treated for hyperthyroidism can go on to live a happy life.