

An innovative new way to manage feline hyperthyroidism

The thyroid gland, located in your cat's neck, uses dietary iodine to make thyroid hormones that help regulate important body functions including your cat's metabolism, body temperature, blood pressure, heart rate and gastrointestinal (bowel) function. A relatively common disorder in older cats called hyperthyroidism occurs when this thyroid gland enlarges and produces excessive amounts of thyroid hormone. Left untreated, hyperthyroidism can have serious, sometimes fatal, consequences on vital organs like the heart and kidneys. The good news is, this disease is highly manageable and can be controlled with proper veterinary care.

"Hyperthyroidism in cats is common; about 10 percent of cats over 10 years of age, and about 3 percent of all cats, develop it," says Dr. Lynda Melendez, medical director of clinical research at Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc.

Signs of hyperthyroidism can vary in severity depending on how long a cat has been ill. If your cat exhibits weight loss, increased appetite or thirst, diarrhea and/or vomiting, poor skin and coat condition or out of the ordinary hyperactivity, contact your veterinarian immediately. In addition, cats with chronic kidney disease and diabetes mellitus may sometimes exhibit some signs similar to hyperthyroidism. Your veterinarian may also need to perform tests for these diseases to ensure an accurate diagnosis.

When it comes to managing a cat with hyperthyroidism, there have been three options: **daily medication** to inhibit the production of thyroid hormones, **radioactive iodine therapy** in which a trained veterinarian will use radiation to treat abnormal thyroid tissue, or **surgery** to remove the diseased thyroid tissue.

In 2011, an **innovative new therapeutic pet food** became available that is clinically proven to restore thyroid health, eliminating the need for other therapies. By carefully limiting the level of iodine your cat consumes, this new product results in your cat's thyroid gland producing normal levels of thyroid hormone when fed as the sole source of nutrition. This new product is a great example of how important nutrition is for managing the overall health of your pet.

"If we can control and manage this disease with nutrition, the overall medical costs are reduced," says Dr. David Bruyette, a boarded veterinary internal medicine specialist focusing on endocrinology. "You're buying food anyway. So even though this is a lifetime management, and the cat will have to eat this food for the rest of his or her life, it can be a more affordable option."

If your cat has been diagnosed with hyperthyroidism, contact your veterinary healthcare team to find out if this innovative nutritional therapy is an appropriate management option for your cat.

