



What is it?

Lymphoma is a common type of cancer in cats. It is caused by the proliferation of malignant lymphocytes (type of white blood cell) that often occurs in the chest, kidneys, nose, skin, spine and gastrointestinal tract. There are several classification systems for lymphoma based on whether or not it is high, intermediate, or low grade (aggressiveness), where it is located in the body, and what type of cells are involved (T-cells vs B-cells). Often times cats present to their veterinarian with clinical signs such as depression, lethargy, vomiting, weight loss and with a decreased appetite.

How is it treated?

Chemotherapy is the best treatment for lymphoma. There are a wide range of chemotherapeutic drugs that can be used in combination to combat this disease. Prednisone in conjunction with other chemotherapeutics will often improve the quality and quantity of life. While there is no cure for lymphoma, it can be put into remission with treatment.

What is the prognosis for feline lymphoma?

About 75% of cats go into remission with treatment, but unfortunately median survival time is usually only 6 months as most cats tend to relapse. If left untreated, most cats will not survive longer than 4-6 weeks. Palliative care like nutritional therapy, prednisone alone and pain medication can help to keep cats comfortable as the disease progresses. A personalized treatment plan is important to slow the progression of lymphoma. Talk to your veterinarian regarding the best treatment protocol for your cat.

What symptoms can present as the disease progresses?

Early stages:

- Decreased appetite
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Enlarged lymphnodes
- Lethargy
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Eye infections

Late stages:

- Persistent early stages
- Lethargy, depression
- Reclusive behavior
- Organ dysfunction
- Presence of a mass
- Constipation due to dehydration
- Difficulty breathing
- Fluid in lungs or chest
- Distended abdomen
- Anorexia

Crisis – Immediate veterinary assistance needed regardless of disease

- Difficulty breathing
- Prolonged seizures
- Uncontrollable vomiting/diarrhea
- Sudden collapse
- Profuse bleeding – internal or external
- Crying/whining from pain*

**It should be noted that most animals will instinctually hide their pain. Vocalization of any sort that is out of the ordinary for your pet may indicate that their pain and anxiety has become too much for them to bear. If your pet vocalizes due to pain or anxiety, please consult with your tending veterinarian immediately.*

Common Signs of Pain

Panting, lameness, difficulty sleeping, pacing, abnormal posture, body tensing, poor grooming habits, tucked tail, dilated pupils, licking sore spot, muscle atrophy, decreased appetite, vocalizing/yowling, reclusive behavior, aggressive behavior, avoiding stairs/jumping, depressed, unable to stand.