

## Introduction

Chronic renal failure (CRF) is a common disease that can affect cats and dogs of any age, but is more prevalent in the older animal. There are many causes: inherited predisposition, toxins, amyloid accumulation, infections, immune diseases, a blocked bladder, dental disease, dehydration, shock, heart disease, kidney stones, tumours, etc. - but whatever the cause, the outcome is the same in CRF – a drastic reduction in healthy kidney tissue. When this happens, the kidneys are unable to cope, drastically reducing the amount of waste products able to be removed from the blood. Treatment is aimed at helping the patient cope with this loss of renal function. Most pets are only diagnosed with CRF when they have already lost over 75% of their kidneys to the disease!



## Diagnosis

Diagnosis of CRF in the very early stages can only be made with blood and urine tests. At this point there is still enough kidney function remaining to cope with daily life (65%) and there will be almost no outward signs that anything is wrong. If diagnosed at this early stage, studies have proven that we can prolong the quantity and quality of your pet's life. This is why vets often advise regular blood and urine testing in the older pet – even if the pet looks fine!

As kidney cells die and the disease progresses further, one may notice weight loss and muscle wastage, increased thirst and urination and generally 'off colour' in behaviour. Other signs include bad breath, vomiting and/or diarrhea, dehydration and inappetence. These symptoms can take weeks or months to gradually appear.

## Control

CRF can't be cured without a kidney transplant, but we can control the symptoms and help your pet feel better. Depending on the severity of the disease and the treatment administered, your pet can do very well for months or even years.

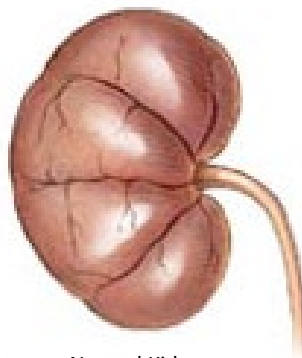
- **Diet—the mainstay of treatment.** Prescription diets are ideal (e.g. Royal Canin Renal Prescription wet and dry Renal food) and many attempts should be made to encourage them to switch to these foods as they often don't take to them straight away. An alternative is a prescription senior diet, such as Royal Canin or Hills Science Diet.

- **Medications—Fortekor**, a prescription medication licenced to treat pets with chronic renal insufficiency or a liquid medication called **Prilium** that most pets don't notice on their food.
- Plenty of **water**—try filtered water or rain water and place in favourite areas.
- Intestinal phosphate binders—Such as **Ipakitine**, which is given with meals to reduce toxic dietary phosphate levels.
- Multivitamins—Especially vitamin B and C that get lost through the urine.
- **Intravenous fluids**—Sometimes kidney patients need to stay in hospital for the day on intravenous fluids if they become dehydrated or sick in other ways (especially in summer). Intravenous fluid therapy is useful in 'flushing' a sick pet's system.
- **Anabolic steroid injections**—given every 6 weeks to reduce the feeling of nausea, help slow down muscle wastage and reduce the level of toxins in the blood.

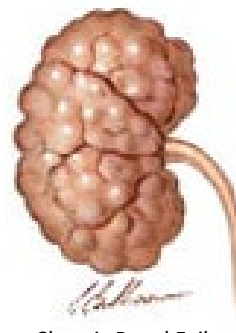
## Prognosis

Although damaged kidney cells cannot be repaired, renal failure is no longer thought of as an automatic death sentence. With appropriate treatment, the disease progression can be slowed down and we can often improve your pet's well-being and extend their lifespan significantly.

Please don't hesitate to contact your veterinarian for more information.



Normal Kidney



Chronic Renal Failure