

Austin Pets Alive's Commitment to Cats with Chronic Renal Failure



APA! does not want cats to be put down simply because they're diagnosed with chronic renal failure (CRF) -- a disease that does not cause great suffering. We firmly believe these cats should enjoy their last years in loving adoptive homes, not in a shelter environment. In an effort to give cats with CRF a good quality of life, we are looking for adopters who are willing to let these cats live out their last days at home with minimal intervention.

To make this possible, the APA! Medical Clinic will provide:

- Lessons in administering subcutaneous fluids as well as the necessary supplies (fluids and needles)
- Prescription renal food when it is donated
- A vet-approved recipe for homemade renal food (to be made at your own expense)
- Euthanasia when the time comes

APA! will NOT provide the following:

- Laboratory testing
- Hospitalization
- Intravenous fluids
- Xrays or ultrasound
- Reimbursement for fees incurred at other hospitals

Email medicalreception@austinpetsalive.org to schedule an appointment with the APA! Medical Clinic.

Kidney Disease Information [Excerpted from Cornell Feline Health Center]

Chronic renal failure is an incurable condition that mainly afflicts middle-aged and older cats. It occurs when 75 percent or more of functional kidney tissue has been destroyed and replaced by scar tissue. Unlike acute renal failure, the onset and progression of this condition—called interstitial nephritis—is gradual, extending over many months or even years.

The exact causes of chronic kidney failure are unknown, although the debilitating loss of healthy kidney tissue may be a natural endpoint for several readily recognizable conditions, including advanced dental disease and a variety of kidney infections, inflammations and obstructions. A high risk for kidney disease may be inherited [...] but the great majority of cases are acquired, and they fall into either of two broad categories: acute and chronic renal failure. The essential difference between the two is that acute renal failure is a severe condition with a relatively sudden onset whose clinical signs become apparent over a period of a week or a month, while chronic renal failure is a disease that has been present for a long time.

By the time a cat is showing signs of chronic renal failure, the underlying cause is for the most part irrelevant, since the loss of healthy kidney tissue will preclude effective treatment of that cause, whatever it may have been. In some cases, little can be done to prolong the life of a cat diagnosed with late-stage chronic renal failure. On the other hand, it is quite common nowadays — thanks to innovative medical and surgical procedures — for some cats to live for one to three years or even longer following early diagnosis.

The early indications of failing kidneys include a marked increase in water consumption (polydipsia) and in urination (polyuria); weight loss; apparent decline in appetite; and, in some cases, occasional vomiting.

The vast majority of chronic renal failure cases will be addressed with conservative medical measures, the objective of which is to provide palliative treatment. These measures can include intravenous fluid therapy and diet modification, which may slow—but not stop—the loss of kidney function. The diet that is usually recommended for affected cats is low in phosphorus and protein, and what little protein is included should be high-quality (cooked eggs, liver, and turkey for example). A diet enriched with sources of vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids may also be recommended.