



303-948-5000

## Vomiting Cats

Chronic vomiting is considered abnormal if it occurs more than twice a month (unless they have hairballs). Inflammatory Bowel Disease, IBD, is the most common cause of vomiting in cats. It is similar to Crohn's Disease in humans, and is a syndrome of waxing and waning vomiting and/or diarrhea. Most cats are normal otherwise, though they become lethargic if the disease progresses without treatment. Most people associate it with eating too fast, or with eating certain foods, but these are confounding factors. The underlying problem is deep, chronic inflammation in the small intestines and/or colon of unknown origin.

To diagnose IBD with certainty, your cat needs to be anesthetized and have intestinal biopsies performed with endoscopy. For this, we can refer you to a specialist. Cost is approx \$1,200 to \$1,500. This is especially important if we suspect your cat has intestinal cancer (a rare, but life-threatening cause of vomiting).

We may recommend an abdominal ultrasound. This helps to rule-out cancers and other causes of vomiting in cats. Cost is approx. \$300 and we have a specialist perform it here at Canyon View.

IBD can be *presumptively* diagnosed by exclusion (ruling out the other causes). We do this by performing several diagnostic tests and treatments for the more common causes of vomiting.

- **Bloodwork** to rule out diabetes, kidney problems, infection, etc.
- **Trial anti-parasite medication**
- **Trial steroids**. Resolution of symptoms is highly suggestive of IBD (but not definitive)
- **Trial diet** to rule out food allergies. 10 to 20% of vomiting cats respond to a diet trial. These foods must be introduced slowly over a period of 1-2 weeks, and then fed *exclusively* for 2 weeks—no treats! These are prescription diets and can only be obtained through a veterinary source. You can try a diet such as Duck and Green Pea (these are ingredients your cat has not been exposed to previously) or Z/D diet, which has proteins and carbohydrates broken down into small molecules the digestive tract does not adversely respond to.
- **Fecal analysis** to detect intestinal parasites. Please bring in a fecal sample!!!
- **X-Rays** to rule out hairballs or foreign body.

IBD is not a food allergy. IBD only responds to steroids, which reduce the inflammation in the digestive tract. If your cat has IBD, s/he will need to remain on steroids the remainder of his/her life. Though steroids cause more severe side effects in humans and dogs, cats are quite resistant to the negative effects and tend to live a good quality life, free of long-term problems.

Initially, we will start your cat on either an injection, or a high dose of prednisilone, and then taper the dose. Our goal is to work with you to find the lowest possible dose that relieves the symptoms (vomiting/diarrhea). IBD is cyclical, so your cat may do well on a certain dose, then suddenly start vomiting, at which point you will need to temporarily increase the medication. We want cats to be on an every other day dosing schedule as much as possible to give the body a day of rest in between doses.

### **Steroids come in several forms:**

Injection—can only be given 2-3 times per year. Advantage: Works for 2-4 weeks. Some cats with severe or long-term IBD may only benefit for several days. Disadvantage: May cause diabetes if given more frequently.

Tablets--Advantage: Cheapest alternative. May be crushed and placed in canned food or given by mouth. Disadvantage: May be difficult to administer if cats reject crushed pills.

Chew Tablets--Advantage: Most cats love them. Come in 150 flavors. Ordered through a pharmacy that sends them directly to your house. Disadvantage: Some cats won't eat them, or only eat them for a while, then reject them. More expensive (about \$1.00 per chew tab).

Liquid--Advantage: May be easier to administer than tablets. Comes in 150 flavors. Ordered through pharmacy that sends them directly to your house. Disadvantage: More expensive, some cats still resist the flavor. Cats rarely lick up the liquid on food.

### **Our plan for your kitty:**

- Injection.** 3-4 weeks after the injection, start oral pred at  $\frac{1}{4}$   $\frac{1}{2}$  of a 5mg tablet every other day--long term. Try to wait 4 weeks, but if s/he starts vomiting sooner, start the prednisilone at that time.
- Start pred now** as directed on the label.
- Your cat needs **3 doses per year of B-vitamins** given by injection once weekly for 3 weeks. We can give the injections here or have you give them at home. Let us know what you prefer. Cats with IBD lose essential B vitamins through the leaky, inflamed bowel and need supplementation. Without supplementation, they often need higher doses of steroids.

Remember! IBD fluctuates in severity. It is **up to you to work with us** to determine your cat's optimal dose. Most cats do well on  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablet of 5 mg pred every other day, with an occasional need for 3-7 days of  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 tablet every day. All cats are different and need varying doses of medication. Stay in touch with us and we will work together to make your kitty as healthy as possible!