

The Senior Care Wellness Exam



Scheduling regular veterinary exams is one of the most important steps you can take to keep your cat healthy and happy throughout his or her lifespan, and this becomes even more important as your cat ages. Just as physicians recommend certain tests, such as cholesterol screening and blood pressure checks, when a person turns 40, the American Animal Hospital Association recommends that annual screening tests should begin when your pet reaches “middle age,” which ranges from 4 to 7 for most cats. These tests:

- ensure that your cat is healthy
- establish “baseline” values for comparison with future test results, and
- help your veterinarian make preventive care recommendations to delay the onset or progression of certain diseases.

As cats enter their senior years, typically at 9 years of age, twice-a-year wellness exams and laboratory tests will be recommended. Remember, your pet ages more rapidly during the golden years, and the risk of developing a chronic condition or serious disease also increases. Scheduling a routine wellness visit every six months will help your veterinarian detect diseases or conditions in their early stages when they may still be treated or controlled effectively.

The senior wellness exam should include a comprehensive medical history; a complete physical exam, which includes checking

your pet’s overall appearance, temperature, body weight, heart, lungs, ears, eyes, teeth and gums, thyroid gland, and skin and coat; age-related laboratory tests (listed below); and preventive health recommendations.

Screening Procedures for Healthy Senior Cats

The most important screening tests for healthy senior cats should include:

- **Complete blood count.** This test helps in the diagnosis of infection, anemia and bleeding problems, and it may provide insight into the status of your cat’s immune system.
- **Serum chemistry profile.** This test is used for assessing the status of the liver, kidneys, pancreas and other organs.
- **Urinalysis.** A urine sample will be checked for evidence of infection and to assess kidney function.
- **Fecal analysis.** A fecal sample will be checked for evidence of parasites and unusual bacteria and protozoa.
- **Thyroid Profile.** This test is used to look at metabolism. In cats, high thyroid levels (metabolism) are a common condition that can lead many other health problems.
- **Other tests.** Your veterinarian may recommend additional testing, including radiography (x-rays), abdominal ultrasonography, and blood pressure measurement.

Your senior cat has given you loyal, lifelong love and companionship. With a little extra care and attention, you and your veterinarian can help your cat enjoy the senior years and live a happier, fuller life.