

TOP TEN SIGNS YOUR PET MAY BE ILL

1 - Drinking or Urinating More Than in the Past

Possible problems: *Kidney disease, liver disease, diabetes, urinary tract infection, adrenal gland dysfunction* **Frequency of these problems:**

Kidney disease is the third leading cause of death in older dogs and the second leading cause in older cats. Liver disease is the fourth leading cause of death in senior dogs. Adrenal gland diseases and diabetes are not as common, but are still seen frequently.



2 - Weight Loss or Change of Appetite

Possible problems: *Cancer, thyroid disease in cats, kidney disease, liver disease, heart disease, gastrointestinal parasites or diseases, diabetes, many others* **Frequency of these problems:**

Cancer is the leading cause of death in senior dogs and cats. Many types of cancer are treatable nowadays, especially if caught early. Thyroid tumors are especially common in older cats and respond to medication, as do many of these other problems. Routine blood screening of older pets picks up many of these diseases. Elderly pets are more prone to picking up intestinal parasites and their stools should be checked more frequently.

3 - Weight Gain or "Pot Belly"

Possible problems: *Deficiency in thyroid or adrenal hormones, fluid build-up in the abdomen from heart or liver disease* **Frequency of these problems:**

Hypothyroidism is the most common endocrine disorder in older dogs and in some breeds can be seen as early as one year of age. "Cushing's Disease", or deficiency in adrenal hormones is common as well, especially in poodles and toy breeds. All of these diseases are treatable with medication.

4 - Decreased Exercise Tolerance

Possible problems: *Heart disease, arthritis, circulatory problems, diseases of the spine, anemia from kidney disease or cancer* **Frequency of these problems:**

Heart disease is the second leading cause of death in older dogs and third in older cats. Special diets and medication can prolong life expectancy by many years, especially in dogs. Early diagnosis is very important. Chest x-rays and EKG screening help us to catch problems early.

5 - Stiffness/Difficulty Rising

Possible problems: *Hip arthritis, spinal arthritis, disc disease, spondylosis* The most important thing to remember is that stiffness is a sign of PAIN. **Frequency of these problems:**

Most large breed dogs will eventually become arthritic. Many smaller dogs and 75% of cats over age 12 will, too. Nutritional supplements and anti-inflammatory medications greatly improve comfort and quality of life. X-rays are very important to diagnose exactly what is wrong - different causes of pain respond to different treatments.

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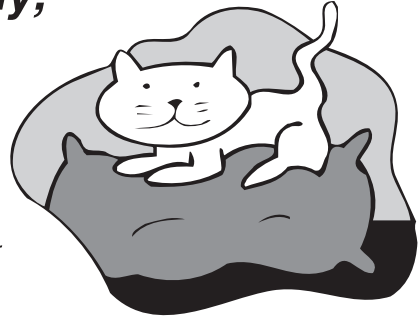
BEST FRIENDS

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6 - Sleeping More or Other Behavior Changes such as Circling, Pacing, Abnormal Sleep Cycles, Decreased Interaction with the Family, Loss of Housebreaking, Confusion

Possible problems: The most common cause is pain. Just as you would if you had a migraine headache, painful pets become quiet and withdrawn or sleep more. Some may be restless and uncomfortable. A trial of pain medication will tell for sure. Canine Cognitive Dysfunction (CCD - similar to Alzheimer's Disease in people), thyroid disease, anemia, bladder infections, cancer, heart problems and other diseases cause a pet to be tired or act differently as well. **Frequency of these**

problems: It is very common to hear owners say their elderly pet "sleeps all the time." This is not a sign of "old age," it is a sign of disease and warrants investigation and treatment. Treatments are available for most of the problems listed, including CCD .



7 - Lumps or Sores

Possible problems: Cancer, infection, benign tumors **Frequency of these problems:** Some lumps are not a problem, including fatty tumors and warts. Others are a major sign of trouble. All lumps should be looked at by a doctor.

8 - Dry or Itchy Skin

Possible problems: Lack of fatty acids in the diet, age-related drying of the skin, allergies, skin infections, parasites, thyroid dysfunction **Frequency of these problems:** Very common. Though these problems are rarely fatal, they can be uncomfortable for the pet and often signal a more serious dietary deficiency or medical problem. Healthy pets should have shiny, glossy coats.

9 - Dry, Mucousy, Red or Cloudy Eyes

Possible problems: Decreased tear production is very common in older dogs and can lead to painful corneal ulcers. Allergies, infections, cataracts, glaucoma and other eye diseases become more common with age. **Frequency of these problems:** Very common, especially dry eyes and cataracts. Some breeds such as cocker spaniels and poodles are more prone than others. Testing tear production and checking for cataracts and glaucoma are standard parts of our examinations and testing for older dogs and cats.

10 - Frequent Digestive Upsets or Change In Stools

Possible problems: Kidney disease, cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, liver disease, intestinal parasites or infections, food allergies, chronic pancreatitis, constipation, and others **Frequency of these problems:** As we stated above, cancer and kidney or liver disease are the leading causes of death. Inflammatory bowel disease, chronic pancreatitis and chronic constipation are all very common in cats, less common in dogs. Special diets or medication may be needed.

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