

Kidney Failure

The kidneys are designed to eliminate waste products from the body, and concentrate that waste in urine. Strong smelling urine is a sign of a healthy kidney in the typical dog or cat. When the kidneys start to fail, they make more urine, and the urine they make is dilute and does not have a strong scent. They make more urine because they still need to get the same amount of waste out of the bloodstream, and since they're less efficient, they have to make more **urine to accomplish this. When the kidneys start to fail significantly, the waste products build up in the bloodstream** and your pet starts to act sick.



Signs of kidney failure often include: excessive drinking, weight loss, poor appetite, lethargy,
Occasionally: vomiting, weakness, seizures, and trouble walking.

Nutritional Management

The primary thing that we do to dogs and cats in kidney failure, to promote longevity and to make them feel better is to change their diet. Even though we often have dogs and cats in renal failure on other medications, the best thing you can do, by far, is to get them reliably on a diet specifically for animals in kidney failure.

The kidney is in charge of eliminating waste products derived from the utilization and digestion of protein. To minimize the stress put on the kidney, we feed people and dogs and cats with kidney failure food with low amounts of high quality protein. "High quality" proteins are ones that are digested with very little waste products, and the low-protein diets we feed to minimize excess protein in your pet's bloodstream. Older dogs and cats have much lower protein requirements than puppies and kittens. And any extra protein just goes right to the kidneys and makes them work harder.

There are a variety of diets we use on dogs and cats in renal failure. The most common one we use is called K/D which comes in canned and hard varieties. However there are other foods available from different manufacturers, as well, and we may need to try a few of them if your dog or cat is extra finicky. **The most important thing to realize is that the food is the medicine. Having your dog or cat eat a special food for kidney failure will prolong their life significantly.** If you do not accomplish this, all medications in the world will not help much.

There is no food that you can find at pet stores or at grocery stores that is anything like K/D. The best way to shorten your pet's life is to continue to feed them grocery store or pet store food. All those foods are very high in protein and a number of them have very low quality protein, the worst things for a dog or cat with kidney disease. Also, it is important to note that bladder stones and FUS are NOT the same problems as kidney failure. The foods for each of these SEPARATE syndromes are completely different.

Foods Available

Hills Prescription diet k/d: (*canned & dry available here*) This food is the standard bearer for dogs and cats with kidney disease. Most dogs and cats eat this food readily.

Royal Canin Low Protein Diets (*canned or dry, available here*) For dogs & cats in renal failure.

Purina NF foods (*canned or dry available here *) For Dogs & Cats

Eukanuba Multi-Stage Renal (*Canned or dry, available here) For Dogs & Cats.

Other Medical Conditions Associated with Kidney Failure

Anemia: Many dogs and cats in kidney failure will become anemic due to a deficiency of a hormone which stimulates the bone marrow to make new red blood cells. This hormone is produced by the kidney. We can supplement this hormone with injections, to help build up the blood counts again.

Dehydration: Some cats will respond very well to periodic injections of large volumes of fluid under their skin to flush waste products out of the bloodstream. Sometimes people can do this at home, sometimes they come in and have us do it for them. At home also make sure your dog or cat has access to fresh clean water. The more water these animals drink, the better off they are.

Poor Appetite: If your dog or cat's appetite is poor, sometimes it is due to a "heartburn-like" response in the stomach which responds to antacids, and sometimes it is due to elevated phosphorus in the bloodstream which responds to phosphorus-binding medications.

Low Blood levels of Potassium: Potassium can be supplemented orally.

Bladder & Kidney Infections: The more dilute your urine is, the more likely your pet is to develop urinary tract infections. By culturing the urine periodically, we can help keep these infections from damaging the kidney further.

Elevated BUN or Phosphorus levels in the bloodstream: Elevation of these two waste products in the bloodstream can lead to nausea and inappetance. Sometimes just giving your pet occasional doses of fluids will help to keep these levels down.

In addition, We now have a powder named **Epakitin** which is designed to be mixed in with canned food, and which helps to lower phosphorus levels in the bloodstream/ We now also have a second medication named **Azodyl**, which can lower BUN levels in the blood as well.

Our Plan For Managing Your Pet

Diet: We would like you to have your pet on _____. Understand that your pet will do best if they eat 100% of this diet with nothing else other than water. If you do treats, avoid high protein treats like meats and fish. High fat or high carbohydrate treats are best. If you cannot get your pet to eat this food, there are other options available to try.

Checkups: Twice yearly we would like to do a full exam, complete blood workup, and a urine analysis. If there is a problem with a urinary tract infection, we may need to do a culture as well.

Potassium Supplement: Yes / Not at this time

Subcutaneous Fluids: Yes every _____ days / Not at this time

Antacids: Yes / Not at this time

Azodyl: Yes / Not at this time

Epakitin: Yes / Not at this time

Our Technician in charge of our Kidney Failure patients is **Ashley Coolidge**. She will be contacting you periodically to make sure all is going well. If you have any specific questions, and Dr. Spodick is not available, please ask to speak with him.

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