

Cat Cardiology: Understanding Your Cat's Heart Health

Heart disease can affect cats of any age or breed. Some cats show no signs until the condition is advanced, which is why awareness and early veterinary care are so important.



Common Types of Heart Disease in Cats

- **Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM):** The most common type, where the heart muscle becomes thickened.
- **Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM):** The heart muscle becomes weak and enlarged (rare today, sometimes linked to diet).
- **Congenital Heart Defects:** Heart conditions present at birth.
- **Secondary Heart Disease:** Heart changes caused by other illnesses (like high blood pressure or hyperthyroidism).



Signs of Heart Disease

Cats may hide symptoms, but watch for:

- Rapid or labored breathing
- Open-mouth breathing or panting
- Lethargy or weakness
- Loss of appetite or weight loss
- Fainting or collapsing
- Sudden paralysis of the hind legs (a possible blood clot

complication) If you notice these signs, seek veterinary care immediately.



Diagnosis

Your veterinarian may recommend:

- Physical exam & listening for murmurs
- **X-rays or ultrasound (echocardiogram)** to assess the heart's structure and function

- Blood pressure checks & lab tests
- **Electrocardiogram (ECG)** to evaluate heart rhythm



Treatment & Management

While there is no cure for most heart diseases in cats, treatment can help improve quality of life:

- **Medications** to relax the heart, control rhythm, or prevent blood clots
- **Dietary adjustments** to support heart health
- **Routine monitoring** with exams and imaging
- **Managing underlying conditions** like hyperthyroidism or hypertension  Supporting Your Cat at Home
- Monitor breathing rate while your cat is resting (normal is usually <30 breaths per minute)
- Give all medications as prescribed
- Minimize stress and keep a calm home environment
- Schedule regular veterinary check-ups

 **Bottom line:** With early detection and proper care, many cats with heart disease can live happy, comfortable lives.



Contact Pleasant Valley Pet Clinic with any concerns about your cat's heart health.