



勝利動物醫院
Victory Animal Hospital

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Liver Diseases

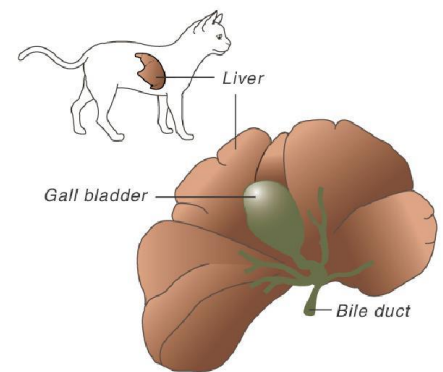
The liver is a complex organ that is responsible for many vital functions.

The liver is sometimes called the "factory of the body" since it is a metabolic organ that performs or controls many of the chemical processes necessary for normal bodily function.

Because of the liver's diverse functions, disease processes can affect the liver in many ways.

What signs and symptoms will you notice in an animal with liver disease?

Some signs are strongly suggestive of liver disease – most notably *jaundice*, which appears as yellow discoloration of the skin, eye and mucous membrane, and *ascites*, which appears as distension of the abdomen due to build-up of fluid. These are often accompanied by less specific symptoms that can be quite variable including lethargy and malaise, changes in appetite, excessive thirst and urination, weight loss, bleeding disorders, vomiting and diarrhea. These may be the only signs noted in some early or mild cases of liver disease. Unfortunately, jaundice and ascites can be symptoms of diseases in other body systems.



How is liver disease diagnosed?

In mild or early cases of liver disease, the signs are often relatively non-specific and further diagnostic testing will be necessary to identify its presence. Since the liver is responsible for such a diverse range of metabolic functions, there is a wide range of blood and urine laboratory tests that may be useful to assess liver disease and function. X-rays and ultrasonography will demonstrate any changes in the size or appearance of the liver.

A wide range of disorders may affect the liver resulting in abnormal liver tests. One of the chief limitations of blood and urine tests and non-invasive imaging techniques is that while they may indicate the presence of liver damage or dysfunction, they cannot indicate the cause or potential reversibility of the problem. In some cases, a biopsy of the liver will provide a specific diagnosis. Your veterinarian determine the most appropriate treatment and an accurate prognosis.

How is liver disease treated?



Specific treatment for the particular liver disease will depend on the diagnosis. However, certain basic and simple supportive measures are useful and strongly recommended.

Changing the diet is often helpful and may delay the progression of disease. Since the liver is involved in digestion and metabolism of all of the major food groups, the traditional recommendations are to provide a diet that "reduces the workload" of the liver.

However, the overriding priority in feeding the animal with liver disease is that it must continue to eat. Therefore, palatability is a crucial consideration in determining the most appropriate diet, especially if it has a poor appetite. Special prescription diets have been formulated to meet the needs of animals with liver disease and you may be asked to feed your pet one of these scientifically formulated diets.

This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM

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