



# HOW TO SUPPORT A CAT WITH CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE (CKD)

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## THE ISSUE

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is a progressive, irreversible, and ultimately terminal disease that affects one in five cats over the age of 15. A cat in the first stage of CKD may have lost 70% or more of his kidney function but may show few outer signs of the disease. Cats in the later stages of CKD are—and appear—very sick. This solution sheet is primarily designed to help owners of cats in the early stages of CKD.

## WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR VETERINARIAN

**Talk with your cat's veterinarian *before* changing the diet or making any other significant change in the care of any cat that has been diagnosed with CKD.** Contact your vet if your cat appears to be ill. Contact your vet immediately if your cat exhibits any of these possible symptoms of late stage kidney failure: vomiting, not producing urine, unusual weakness, signs of blindness, refusing to eat for more than 36 hours. There are no commercial diets available that can provide the same balance of nutrients as prescription CKD diets, and we never recommend switching off a prescription CKD diet without a vet's approval.

## THE SOLUTION

We've provided a variety of approaches and starred (\*) the ones we think will accomplish the most for most cats in the early stages of CKD.

### **1 \*Transition your cat to a moisture-rich, high quality protein diet**

There are two substantially different nutritional approaches to CKD: a low-protein approach and a moisture-rich, high quality protein approach. The low protein approach is characterized by low protein, often includes plant protein sources and is often consumed in low-moisture kibble form. The moisture-rich, high quality protein approach seeks to maximize dietary moisture intake and minimize the strain on the kidneys by sourcing protein from high quality animal muscle or organ meat. We believe that many cats with CKD, especially those in the early stages, will benefit from the moisture-rich, high quality protein approach, but we believe that owners must consult a vet before selecting a dietary approach for a cat with CKD.

- **If your cat is eating only kibble**, begin by fully transitioning her to wet food. (See our *How to Transition Cats to Wet Foods*.) Then seek to transition her from wet food to raw food.
- **If your cat is eating a mix of kibble and wet or raw food**, begin by gradually reducing the amount of kibble and increasing the amount of wet or raw food. Make the transition to a totally wet or raw diet slowly over the course of a month.
- **If your cat is eating only wet food**, try to transition her to raw foods. (See our *How to Feed Your Cat Freeze-dried and Dehydrated Food* and our *How to Feed Your Cat Frozen Raw Food*.)
- **If your cat refuses anything but kibble**, choose a kibble from the list below and try adding water to it. Begin with a small amount and gradually increase the amount of water with each meal to 1 to 1½ cups of water per half cup of kibble (or as much as your cat will tolerate without reducing her food intake).

A Mud Bay Staffer can use our formula browser to find for you the foods we currently carry with the phosphorus levels at or below 0.8% (2 g/1000kcal, dry matter). If your cat would appear to benefit from a moderate level of protein, we can also look for formulas below 40% protein (dry matter).

## **2 \*Water, water, water**

The most natural and effective way to increase your cat's total intake of moisture is to increase the moisture content of his food from around 10% (kibble) to around 70% (wet, raw frozen, rehydrated and cat's natural diet of small prey.) But it also makes sense to encourage cats to drink more water.

- **\*Change water daily.** Cats are more likely to drink water that smells and tastes fresh.
- **\*Multiple sources.** Provide several water choices in different places. No water near litter boxes.
- **Make it move.** Cats are attracted to running water, and some are more likely to drink water that moves. Cat fountains are less wasteful than leaving a tap running.
- **Make it taste good.** Some cats drink more when their water tastes better. Switching to bottled or filtered water may increase consumption and so may adding low sodium broth from chicken, tuna, clams or sardines. At least one water dish should be plain water.

## **3 \*Make litter boxes more inviting**

Cats with CKD should pee a lot, and owners should do everything they can to facilitate frequent urination. Most cats prefer a clean litter box. To ensure your cat never hesitates, provide at least two litter boxes; put them in different places and clean them once or twice daily. Most cats like to pee where they feel quiet and safe.

Experiment with location and with open and covered boxes to find the pee situation your cat prefers. To prevent a situation where your cat dislikes all of his litter box choices (and chooses to pee outside his box), always keep your cat's top choice available—then test alternative boxes and locations against his favorite.

## **4 \*Improve kidney health**

Herbal supplements may help increase blood flow to the kidneys and increase urination frequency and volume.

## **5 \*Reduce chronic inflammation**

Supplementation with the natural anti-inflammatories EPA and DHA appears to increase the survival time of cats with CKD. Daily supplementation with Salmon/Pollock Oil or Primal Sardine Grind is recommended.

## **6 \*Increase B12 levels**

Cats with CKD may suffer from vitamin deficiencies—particularly B12, a water-soluble vitamin that is lost through urine. Lack of B12 can cause reduced appetite, lethargy and eventually anemia (lack of red blood cells.)

## **7 Treat nausea**

Many cats with CKD experience bouts of severe nausea. Supplements that can reduce nausea include: Vitamin B12 supplements.

## **RESULTS**

Sadly, cats diagnosed with CKD are likely to die from CKD. However, in many cases, dietary and other therapies can extend the lives of CKD cats as well as improve the quality of their lives. Only a vet can measure kidney function, but one thing owners can look for is frequent, copious urination—generally, the more pee the better for CKD cats.

## **STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Mud Bay staffers are specifically trained to help owners of cats with early stage CKD. Muddies can also help you find the products that match the recommendations on this sheet, so if you need more help or information, please let us know.

Mud Bay and its staff strive to help dog and cat owners improve the health of their animals and to increase the happiness owners experience in caring for their animals by providing natural foods, well-made supplies and useful information. Mud Bay and its staff do not diagnose or treat specific conditions, and the information provided by Mud Bay's staff, publications, website and other media are not substitutes for treatment by a veterinarian. A great vet is an invaluable resource, and we recommend that owners discuss diet and other changes in the care of their animals with theirs.