



DIETARY MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC RENAL INSUFFICIENCY (CRI)

One of the most important factors in managing your cat's kidney disease is making kidney friendly modifications to the diet of your cat. The things that need to be considered in modifying the diet of your cat include the following.

Water:

One of the most vital functions of the kidneys is to maintain the water balance of the body. When kidney function is reduced there is more water lost through the urine and so the cat is constantly fighting dehydration. It is imperative to have plenty of water always available to drink, and to encourage your cat to eat wet food as much as possible.

Protein:

In healthy cats the kidneys excrete waste products from the breakdown of protein in the body. Traditionally diets designed for cats with kidney damage have been low in protein, as these cats are less able to excrete these protein by-products which then build up in the blood stream. Recently the importance of this has been questioned. It is now thought that the phosphorus content of the diet is more important, but it is difficult to reduce the phosphorus levels in a diet without reducing the protein, so most diets designed for kidney disease have reduced protein.

Phosphorus:

When kidneys are damaged they are less able to excrete excess phosphorus. High levels of phosphorus in the body tend to cause nausea, which in turn reduces the appetite. The specially designed diets for kidney disease are restricted in phosphorus, and there are also phosphorus 'binders' available to help the body excrete phosphorus through the faeces.

Potassium:

Potassium is one of the electrolytes in the body that is kept in balance by the kidneys. As kidney disease progresses, the body can lose potassium; hence kidney friendly diets should have higher than usual amounts of potassium. Some cats will need to have extra potassium supplements as the disease progresses.

Keeping the blood stream less acidic:

Acidic blood (also known as Metabolic acidosis) is a common complication of CRI in cats and can lead to decreased appetite, vomiting, lethargy, weakness and weight loss. Acidified blood can also lead to protein breakdown and hence muscle wastage as well as causing further damage to the kidneys. Pre-prepared kidney diets are formulated to help fight against this problem.

Salt restriction:

Sodium should be restricted in CRI cats as the kidneys are not as able to excrete sodium adequately and excessive sodium intake may promote high blood pressure (hypertension). The pre-prepared kidney diets stocked by Paddington Cat Hospital are all very good, with minor differences in formulation; however you may find your cat has a preference for one particular brand. These include: Hills k/d, Eukanuba Multi-Stage Renal, and Walthams Renal Support. They are all available as wet and dry food.

There are some foods that you may use as treats for your cat, which are not usually thought of as cat foods. All these "treats" are made of palatable carbohydrates with as much fat as can be tolerated by your cat. Examples include creamed corn (low in phosphorus), custard, ice cream, and mashed or tinned pumpkin (this helps to bind phosphorus).