

“An Ounce of Prevention is worth a Pound of Cure”

Human medicine has long recognized the health and cost benefits to early detection of disease. The good news is that pets are now living longer. The largest contributing factors to this longevity is advancement in veterinary medicine and increased owner compliance to veterinary recommendations. As is commonly known, pets age faster than we do, consequently health problems develop rapidly, especially in older animals. Fortunately, with through physical exams and modern diagnostic testing, we can detect the onset of disease and conditions early, when treatment and prevention are most effective.

Senior wellness programs provide an assessment of your pets overall health. Your veterinarian can give timely recommendations from issues ranging from arthritis, to dental disease to serious medical conditions. Remember, for optimal care your pet should at least be examined every six months, which is similar to a time span of 2 to 3 years in people.

Review the following early detection questionnaire to see if your pet has any “red flag” symptoms.

- Bad Breath or drooling
- Change in activity level
- Change in appetite or weight
- Change in attitude or responsiveness
- Change in sleeping patterns
- Change in Urination (amount or frequency)
- Change in water consumption
- Confusion or disorientation
- Constipation, diarrhea, or vomiting
- Coughing
- Heavy or rapid breathing at rest
- Incontinence
- Lethargy or depression
- Lumps or bumps on or under skin
- Noticeable decrease in vision (bumping into furniture)
- Sneezing
- Stiffness (trouble jumping, climbing stairs, or walking)

There are five types of basic tests your veterinarian will use to evaluate wellness.

1. Complete Blood Count (CBC) – The CBC tests for anemia, infection, inflammation and overall healthiness of the blood cells.
2. Chemistry Test- The chemistry panel surveys many of the organ systems of the body to make sure they are working normally.

3. Thyroid Function Tests-These test are useful in diagnosing hypothyroidism (too little thyroid hormone) which is common in dogs and to a less degree horses, and hyperthyroidism (too much thyroid hormone) which is common in older cats.
4. Urinalysis- While some serum chemistries help evaluate kidney function, much more information is obtained when a urinalysis is done at the sametime. The urine sample is tested for several chemical components (glucose, protein, blood and more) , as well as any cells (wbc,rbc,epithelial etc) , and crystals.
5. Parasite Exam
 - A. Fecal_ Hookworms, whipworms, round worms, coccida, giardia and other intestinal parasites can be detected with a stool sample.
 - B. Blood Serum is tested for presence of heartworms, and whole blood can be tested for parasite such as babesia, hemobartonella, and cytauxzoon.

Recognizing, diagnosing and treating early will improve quality of life and minimize financial cost.

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