

BRIARPOINTE VETERINARY CLINIC

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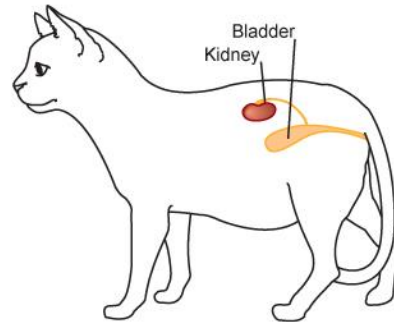
ACUTE RENAL FAILURE IN CATS

What is acute renal failure?

Acute renal failure (ARF) or acute kidney failure refers to the sudden failure of the kidneys to perform normal filtration duties. ARF leads to dehydration, accumulation of toxins in the bloodstream, imbalance of electrolytes and disturbances in the acid-base balance of the blood. ARF is potentially reversible if diagnosed early and treated aggressively. Older cats are at higher risk for developing ARF. ARF must be distinguished from the much more common form of kidney failure, chronic renal failure (CRF).

What are the clinical signs of acute renal failure?

The clinical signs of ARF may include sudden anorexia, listlessness, vomiting, diarrhea that also may contain blood, a strange breath odor, and/or seizures. Some cats will urinate more frequently while others may not be producing any urine at all. There may be a recent history of ingestion of a toxin (especially antifreeze) or of recent trauma, surgery or illness. Many cats are in systemic shock by the time they reach the veterinary hospital.



What causes acute renal failure?

There are numerous causes of ARF. Some of the more common causes include:

- Antifreeze poisoning (ethylene glycol toxicity)
- Systemic shock
- Heart failure
- High blood pressure or hypertension
- Clotting disorders
- Drugs such as NSAIDs (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs) or certain antibiotics
- Ureteral or urethral obstruction
- Insect or snake venom
- Heavy metals such as lead, mercury, arsenic or thallium
- Lily or other poisonous plant ingestion

How is acute renal failure diagnosed?

Diagnosis is based on medical history, clinical signs, and the results of blood and urine tests. Other tests that may be recommended are abdominal radiographs, abdominal ultrasound, radiographic contrast or dye studies, fine-needle aspiration or surgical biopsy of the kidneys.



What is the treatment for acute renal failure?

Treatment is focused on removing the circulating toxins as quickly as possible. This is usually accomplished by administering intravenous fluids for twenty-four to ninety-six hours. If toxin exposure or a drug reaction is suspected, it is recommended that the stomach be emptied of its contents immediately, followed by administration of activated charcoal to prevent further absorption of toxins.

Nutritional support may be required in cats with persistent or uncontrollable vomiting. We will recommend an aggressive treatment plan to give your cat the best chance of recovering from ARF.

What is the prognosis for a cat diagnosed with acute renal failure?

Acute renal failure is a serious and life-threatening condition. If the cause is an infection, there is a better prognosis than if the cause is a toxic substance. The initial prognosis is guarded for all cases of ARF. The long term prognosis for recovery is based on the amount of kidney damage that has occurred. The kidney has limited capacity to regenerate or “heal” itself, justifying the guarded prognosis. We can provide you with a more accurate prognosis based on your cat’s clinical signs and individual condition.

Edited by John S. Parker, DVM

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