

PANCREATITIS

Pudge's Story

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When Pudge's owners noticed he was lethargic and had stopped eating normally, they knew something was wrong. Pudge, a 4-year-old tabby cat, was taken to see a veterinarian and in the course of a day, his health had rapidly deteriorated. He arrived at the hospital in critical condition with extremely low blood pressure and temperature. In cats, this is an indication of shock. Pudge needed intensive care for several days before he was downgraded to stable condition.

What brought Pudge to this condition was a severe case of pancreatitis. Pudge's pancreatitis was diagnosed via a combination of blood testing and an ultrasound. Additionally, the ultrasound showed that Pudge's spleen was unusually inflamed. Aspirate (cell) samples of the spleen revealed atypical cells that were worrisome for cancer. Fortunately, cancer was not another issue he would have to face. Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas that is typically caused by inflammation in the intestinal tract in cats. The pancreas is located adjacent to the intestines and often suffers an insult secondarily to inflamed intestines due to its shared ducts and proximity.

The causes of pancreatitis are notoriously difficult to pinpoint. Cats typically contract pancreatitis due to underlying intestinal bacterial imbalances. The

bacteria migrate through the pancreatic duct into the pancreas where it causes infection and inflammation. This is different than the typical presentation of dogs with pancreatitis, in which it can be caused by infection, but more often from

his body's breakdown of the red blood cells as they tried to fight the pancreatitis. Moreover, Pudge had Blood Type B, which is extremely rare. Most cats (about 98%) have Blood Type A, so blood donors with his type are difficult to find. In

addition to a blood transfusion, he underwent IV fluid administration for hydration and protein support, antibiotics and pain medication.

After a long week of intense care, Pudge thankfully made a full recovery! Pancreatitis can present with non-specific signs, so he was fortunate that his owners were quick to notice his change in behavior and sought veterinary care. Cats and dogs with pancreatitis present a wide range of clinical signs and severity of signs. Most will make a full recovery, but some of the most severely affected can develop life threatening systemic inflammatory responses that can cause overwhelming inflammation in the intestines, liver, abdominal cavity or lungs. Because there are so many underlying potential causes

of pancreatitis, prevention of pancreatitis and recurrences is difficult. Like Pudge's parents, all pet owners should be mindful of their pet's subtle signs of illness or pain. This is often easier said than done, however. Many cats try to hide their symptoms until they are actually very sick. With early detection, treatment can start sooner and prevent further harm to your companion.



diet indiscretion (such as unusually high fat snacks or meals).

Treatment for pancreatitis depends on the severity of the case and the underlying cause. Treatment may be as simple as outpatient antibiotics and changing to a low fat/low residue diet. In Pudge's case, treatment was much more intense. Pudge required a blood transfusion due to underlying intestinal bleeding and