

Feline Uveitis FAQs

UTCVM OPHTHALMOLOGY

What is uveitis?

Uveitis means inflammation inside the eye. Some signs of uveitis include cloudiness, swelling, tearing, squinting, and redness.

What are the causes of uveitis in cats?

In cats, uveitis can be an indicator of systemic disease. There are several infectious causes of uveitis, specifically Feline leukemia virus (FeLV), feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), *Toxoplasma gondii* (toxoplasmosis), *Bartonella hensale*, and fungal infections (Cryptococcus, Histoplasmosis, Blastomycoses). Cancer such as lymphoma is also a possible diagnosis in cats. However, in up to 40-70% of cats no definitive cause can be identified. These cases are referred to as idiopathic or immune-mediated uveitis. In chronic cases where your pet appears otherwise healthy, idiopathic/immune-mediated is the most likely cause.

Diagnostics to determine if an underlying systemic disease has initiated the uveitis is recommended. These diagnostics can include general bloodwork, imaging of the body (radiographs and ultrasound), and specific tests to look for infectious diseases, as well as others if indicated on physical examination.

How is uveitis treated?

Treatment is focused on reducing the severity and number of episodes of inflammation and decreasing the risk of secondary complications. Different topical or oral anti-inflammatory medications are used to decrease the inflammation and improve comfort, while some oral antimicrobial medications may be recommended if a systemic cause of uveitis, like an infection, was discovered.

What are complications of uveitis and treatment of uveitis?

Uveitis can cause complications detrimental to the eyes if left untreated, or remains uncontrolled with treatment including secondary glaucoma (high intraocular pressure), corneal ulcers, scar tissue, cataracts, lens luxation, and retinal detachment or degeneration, some of which can lead to vision loss.

Topical and oral steroids can induce an outbreak of feline herpes virus in cats. Thus, secondary conjunctivitis and corneal ulcers can occur with the treatment of uveitis when steroids are prescribed. Oral steroids should be used with caution in cats, as the chronic use of steroids can lead to secondary complications inducing diabetes mellitus and heart disease. If coughing, lethargy, increased appetite, weight loss, increased drinking or increased urination are noted in your cat while they are on steroids, please seek veterinary attention.



Obtaining measurements of the intraocular pressure helps determine if a patient has uveitis (associated with low pressure) or glaucoma (associated with high pressure).

What is the expected prognosis?

Sometimes uveitis is a single episode and once treated appropriately there are no recurrences. However, other times cats can develop chronic uveitis, where chronic medications are required. Either way a slow taper (decrease) in medications is often suggested.

Even with appropriate therapy, the 2 most common complications of chronic uveitis in the cat include glaucoma and lens luxation. Follow up examinations ensure optimal therapy is being given and guard against possible complications.