



What is lymphoma?

Lymphoma is a cancer of the white blood cells called lymphocytes. In cats, lymphoma commonly involves the intestinal tract, but at the same time can also involve other organs such as the liver, spleen and lymph nodes.

What are some of the symptoms of intestinal lymphoma?

Some of the most common symptoms of intestinal lymphoma in cats include weight loss, decreased appetite, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. These symptoms can also be signs related to other diseases, so if your pet shows these signs, contact your veterinarian.

What is the behavior of intestinal lymphoma?

Intestinal lymphoma in cats can be described by the cell type on microscopic evaluation. Small cell lymphoma generally results in signs that progress more slowly than other types of lymphoma. Intermediate or large cell lymphoma patients may have more rapid growth of their cancer and signs may worsen faster.

What is the treatment for intestinal lymphoma?

Intestinal lymphoma involves multiple parts of the intestinal tract. Because of this, localized therapies like surgery or radiation are infrequently recommended and [chemotherapy](#) is the treatment of choice. Depending on the cell type noticed on biopsy or needle aspirate, your oncologist can discuss various chemotherapy options with you. Small cell lymphoma patients generally can be started on oral chemotherapy, whereas patients with intermediate cell or large cell lymphoma may need injectable chemotherapy.

What are the side effects of chemotherapy?

In general, cats tolerate chemotherapy very well. Side effects may include bone marrow suppression (decreased white blood cells, platelets, or red blood cells) and gastrointestinal upset (vomiting, diarrhea, decreased appetite). Cats generally do not lose all of their hair during treatment, but regrowth of the hair may be slower than usual. Some drugs may have specific side effects (such as toxicity to kidneys, or liver). We check blood counts before every chemotherapy administration and depending on the drug being administered, may recommend other blood tests to evaluate organ function. Approximately 80% of patients have mild to no side effects and 10-20% may have moderate side effects that are easily managed with medications or fluid therapy. Our protocols are intentionally designed so that less than 5% of patients have severe side effects that may require hospitalization with potentially life-threatening complications.

If your cat gets ill, please let your oncologist know and we can try to assess whether to reduce the dose the next time or send home supportive medications with the next chemotherapy dose. Our primary goal is to provide a good quality of life throughout the chemotherapy. Please see our [Chemotherapy](#) handout for more information.

How do you measure if my cat is in remission or responding to treatment?

Often we will use your assessment of how your cat is feeling based on appetite, activity, or gastrointestinal signs (weight, vomiting, or diarrhea). We may also periodically check an abdominal ultrasound to determine if a patient is in remission.

What is the prognosis for cats with intestinal lymphoma?

Prognosis varies depending on the specific type of lymphoma your cat has. Although we are unable to cure your pet of its lymphoma, most lymphoma patients have a good chance of responding to chemotherapy. Your oncologist will discuss this more specific prognosis with you once they have evaluated your pet and the lab results.