



HYPERCALCEMIA

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Hypercalcemia is a condition characterized by elevated blood calcium levels. Calcium serves many vital roles in the body but are most commonly known for bone strength and proper muscle function.

Some common diseases that cause an elevated blood calcium include certain types of cancer, kidney disease, vitamin D intoxication (certain rat poisons), underactive adrenal system (See caregiver resource on hypoadrenocorticism), and some fungal diseases.

Symptoms vary depending on the severity of elevation but may include lethargy, loss of appetite, increased drinking/urination, muscle weakness and twitching, vomiting, diarrhea, cardiac arrhythmias and even seizures.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Confirmation of **hypercalcemia** is done through routine blood testing. However, advanced testing is often required to find the underlying cause. Imaging (radiographs, ultrasound) are often used to identify the presence of certain types of cancers, whereas reference lab testing can help characterize or confirm other calcium inducing diseases.

TREATMENT

Treatment of **hypercalcemia** will vary and is focused depending on the underlying cause, however immediate supportive therapy may be required in more intensive care patients. These immediate supportive therapies may include fluid therapy, steroids, diuretics, calcitonin, and dietary management.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- The prognosis of **hypercalcemia** depends on identifying and treating the underlying condition.
- Ionized calcium levels are more sensitive and should be monitored regularly through treatment.