



CHOLANGIOHEPATITIS

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Cholangiohepatitis causes inflammation in a cat's liver and bile ducts. It's the second most common liver issue in cats, after hepatic lipidosis (see that handout for details).

Biopsies reveal three main forms:

- **Suppurative:** Bacterial infection. Germs travel from the intestines up the bile duct into the liver. Often seen with inflammatory bowel disease or pancreatitis (see those handouts).
- **Lymphocytic:** Immune-mediated. More chronic, with some liver scarring that complicates treatment.
- **Destructive:** Liver overrun by immune cells and heavily scarred. Hard to treat, with a poor prognosis.

Symptoms (in any form):

- Yellowing of eyes, skin, or gums (jaundice)
- Swollen belly
- No appetite
- Vomiting
- Weight loss

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Symptoms and routine blood tests can spot changes in liver enzymes.

A definitive diagnosis requires a liver biopsy, usually done with ultrasound guidance. Cats often need a clotting test beforehand to ensure it's safe.

TREATMENT

Treatment depends on severity and duration—many feline patients require hospitalization for supportive care.

- **Suppurative:** Good prognosis with extended antibiotics. Treat inflammatory bowel disease/pancreatitis simultaneously if present (see handouts).
- **Lymphocytic:** Often responds well but lifelong; steroids (glucocorticoids) suppress immunity indefinitely.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Aggressively treat Cholangiohepatitis to prevent the development of hepatic lipidosis.
- Watch for an improvement or a return of icterus/jaundice as a guide of severity of liver condition.