



# Central Texas Veterinary SPECIALTY & EMERGENCY HOSPITAL

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## FELINE FATTY LIVER SYNDROME

### ***What is the Fatty Liver Syndrome, and how does a cat get it?***

The feline Fatty Liver Syndrome (FLS) is also known as feline hepatic lipidosis. This disease is peculiar to cats and is one of the most common liver diseases seen in cats.

The typical cat with the FLS has recently gone through a period of anorexia (not eating). The chances of the FLS occurring are greater if the cat was obese before the anorexia began. As fat is broken down to supply nutrients for the anorectic cat, the fat is deposited so rapidly in the liver that it cannot be processed. It becomes stored in and around the liver cells, resulting in liver failure. The cat usually becomes icteric or jaundiced, as evidenced by a yellow color in the whites of the eyes or in the skin. At this point, the disease will be fatal if not treated rapidly and aggressively.

### ***How is it diagnosed?***

Diagnosis of the FLS is made from blood tests for liver function and from a liver biopsy or aspirate. The former may be performed during surgery or with a needle inserted through the skin. The tissue sample is sent to a pathologist for interpretation. The latter involves inserting a very tiny needle through the skin and into the liver, removing a small number of liver cells, and examining those cells under the microscope. The FLS cat will have a large amount of fat in and among the liver cells. Generally, other tests are then performed to determine why the cat quit eating. If the cause for anorexia is treatable or resolved, the prognosis is reasonably good.

### ***Is this a treatable disease?***

This disease is very treatable, but treatment of the FLS requires that the cat receive nutritional support until the appetite returns. A consistently high quality diet will allow the liver to resume functioning so it may remove the fat. This does not occur quickly; it takes an average of 6-7 weeks. Therefore, a method of force feeding must be used to allow you to feed your cat at home.

### ***How do I provide the necessary nutritional support?***

A feeding tube is surgically implanted into your cat so you can syringe special food through it into the stomach. There are several types of feeding tube. The best one for your cat will be determined based on several factors.