

Wilmette Pet Center

"the place for people who love pets"

The last part of our series is going to focus on the internal systems, those vital systems whose health can be a complete mystery to us. This is where a great relationship with a vet you trust is vital. It's recommended that aging pets visit the vet twice a year. While this may seem like a lot, it gives them a good chance of catching any problems earlier. For a lot of these systems, blood work is going to be one of the most important tools here to get an idea of what is going on. For others, it's going to rely on your own observations of your pet. Discuss any health concerns you have with your vet and determine what tests are needed.



Immune system: Your pet's prime line of defense! When this begins to get weak, their body can become susceptible to all sorts of pathogens. Exercise, the proper diet, and reducing stress are all vital to a strong immune system.



Offer support for weak immune systems with herbal supplements such as [Herbsmith's Immune Support](#). Some animal's immune systems get too active as they age, and they become allergic to things that have never bothered them before. In this case, [Herbsmith's Clear Aller Qi](#) offers a natural way to bring balance back to their immune system.

Liver: The liver is where all the toxins of life get removed. The best way to support the liver is to ease its burden: feed a whole, species appropriate diet that is as close to natural as possible, with no preservatives and additives. It sounds simple, but our dogs and cats live in a world filled with toxins that can be overwhelming. Foods can be broken down into two groups: foods that harm and foods that heal. High chemical loads and inappropriate ingredients can all increase the burden on the liver.

Milk thistle has long been used to help detoxify the liver. Herbsmith's Milk thistle blend is great for a cat or dog with allergies, digestive issues, or to combat the negative side effects of the harsher alternatives.

Kidneys: Especially important for cats is keeping up their water consumption. Cats are naturally desert creatures, and don't have a big thirst response. Their bodies expect to get the needed moisture through their diet (in the wild it's rodents, lizards, and birds). With cats living indoors, people tend to feed dry kibble - perhaps to the mistaken old wive's tale that canned food rots a cat's teeth while dry helps keep them clean. Over the years, the cat's kidney dry out, leading to kidney disease later in life. (Just

remember, all food is going to make your mouth dirty). Most wholistic vets now feel that raw diets, followed by canned foods, are going to give your cats the moisture they need the way their bodies expect. Keeping your pets on diets high in moisture, especially when started young, can help stave off kidney problems.

(As an aside, one of our favorite facts to point out is the shape and function of a cat's teeth. They're sharp and angled, ideal for cutting meat. They're not flat for grinding, and when you hear your cat eating their food, they have to use their tongue or the roof of their mouth to help chew the foods. Canned and raw diets are a lot easier on their mouths.)



A pet fountain, like the [Cat-It Drinking Fountain](#) is a great way to increase the moisture in your pet's diet; most animals just love to drink from moving water, and this is a lot easier than leaving a faucet on! They're great, too, because the continuous circulation keeps the water cool and the included filter helps keep the water clean.

Check out them chompers - no molars here. (Looks like someone could use some Tropiclean Dental Gel!

Heart: Prevention here is key! Keeping your dog active and feeding an appropriate diet during their lives will help prevent heart issues in your pet. Keeping your pet's weight will help keep the heart healthy and reduce the strain on it.

We're beginning to sound like a broken record here! The proper diet, antioxidants, and fish oil are all vital to a healthy heart.

Brain: This can be one of the most difficult changes to see in your beloved pet. There are no real tests the vet can do to determine brain function; here, it's up to your powers of observation. Things to look for are confusion, anxiety, increased sleeping, forgetting (including housebreaking), and behavioral changes.

Offer your pet a lot of mental stimulation, including toys, puzzles, and treats they have to figure out. The stuffable Bento ball is a great toy; once they work away the treat in the middle, you can fill it with your own fun recipes or help keep them busy (check out my article on [recipe ideas](#) - you can use them as frozen or not!) A lot of socializing with friends, new and old, is also vital in helping keep their brain active and flexible.



There are a wide range of supplements that help support a healthy, functional brain. These range from the ever healthy omega 3s from fish oils, to ginkgo, to coconut oil. Herbsmith's coconut oil is a high quality supplement that supports

The stuffable Bento Ball

brain, skin, and joint functions. SamE, that supplement that people are finding so helpful for mood regulation and memory has been shown to have the same effects for our pets (consult your vet on appropriate dosages.)

Time can indeed get the better of our pets. As a caring pet owner, we want to do everything in our power to keep them at their healthiest for the longest period of time. With a proper diet, a the help of a trusted vet, and some attention to the changing needs of our aging pet, we can do just that.