

Your handy guide to your cat's health

As your cat gets older, subtle health changes can creep up. Here's what you should keep an eye out for, and the steps you can take:



Frequent urination

The most common causes of frequent weeing, along with increased thirst in older cats, are kidney disease or diabetes. But it can be difficult to know exactly how much your pet is drinking and urinating, especially if you have more than one cat. Look out for signs such as drinking from running taps and even toilets. If you spot your cat doing this, ask your vet to check for any underlying causes.



Changes in appetite

If your cat suddenly seems constantly hungry, diabetes or an overactive thyroid could be the issue. On the other hand, loss of appetite can be due to a change in your cat's environment that's made her stressed and less likely to eat, or because of infection or pain (especially from dental issues). Your vet can help to pinpoint the reason.



Weight loss

As pets get older, they may gradually lose a couple of pounds due to declining muscle mass. But if you notice any sudden or significant weight changes, it can be a sign of heart, liver, kidney disease or an overactive thyroid gland. Other causes of weight loss include diabetes, which can be common in older cats – so it's best to book a check-up as soon as you can.



Lethargy

As cats age, they do tend to sleep more, but if you notice that your pet has lost interest in playing and is sleeping more in the daytime (but less at night) it may be a sign of feline dementia. It's also important to check that your cat isn't sleeping more and moving less because she feels unwell or is in pain. Cats who are in pain (for example, due to arthritis) rarely show their discomfort unless they are being handled.



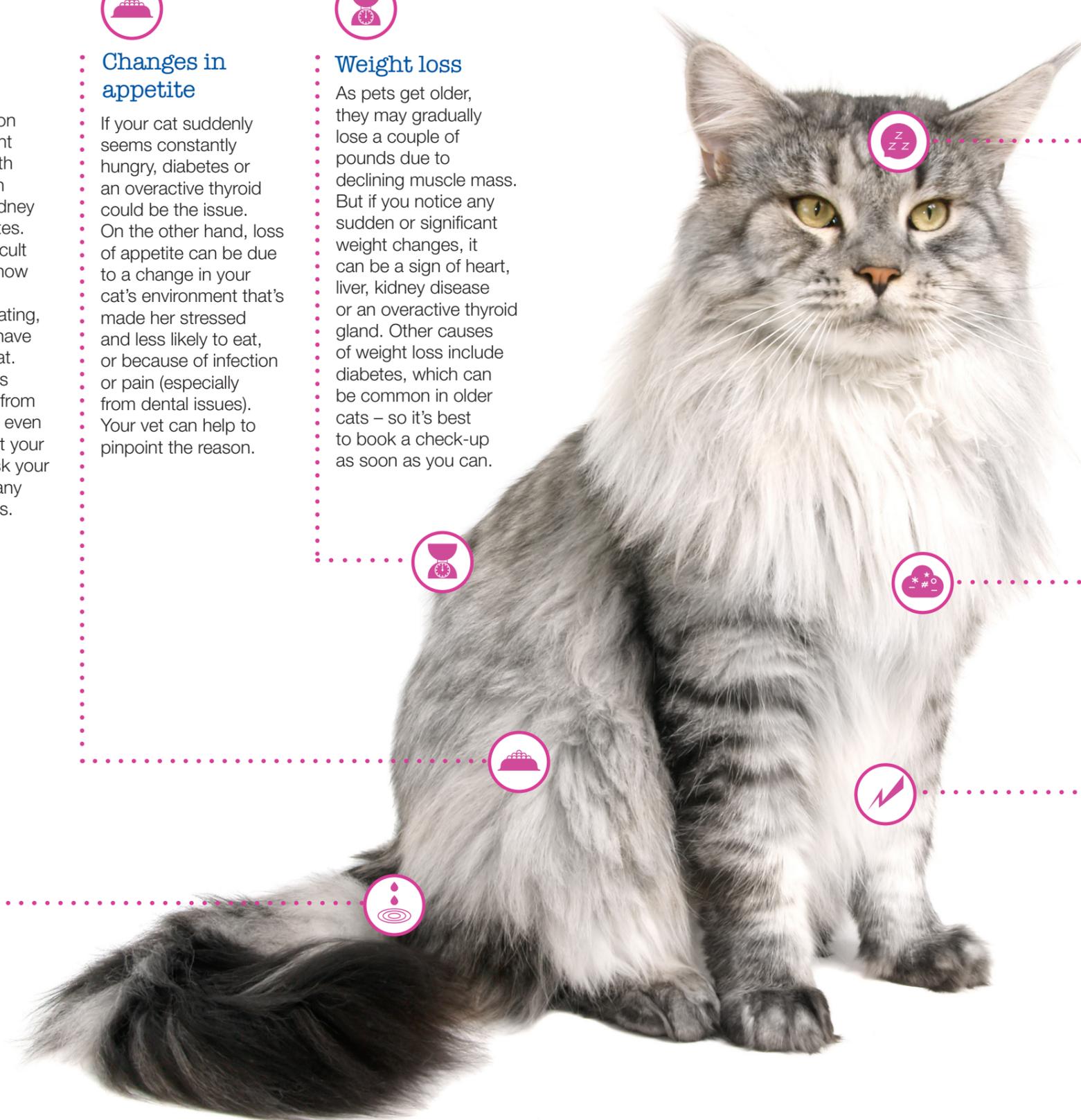
A bad smell

Smelly breath in cats is commonly due to dental disease and inflamed gums. A sore mouth can have a knock-on effect on your cat's ability to groom herself, which may lead to a dirtier, matted coat. Kidney problems might also be to blame for a bad smell, as toxins can build up in a cat's body and come out in the breath.



Reluctance to jump or walk upstairs

If you notice that your cat is avoiding physical activity that she used to do with ease, or no longer interacts with you in the same way (for example, by jumping onto your lap) it could be an indication that she is in pain. A problem such as arthritis might be the cause.



Have you noticed any of the symptoms on this list?

Don't hesitate to book an appointment with your vet and, to keep your pet as healthy as possible, schedule regular six-monthly check-ups, too.