

# Feline Mammary Carcinoma

## What is a feline mammary carcinoma?

Tumors of the mammary gland develop when the cells associated with the mammary gland become cancerous and grow uncontrollably. In cats, any of the glands are susceptible to developing a tumor and multiple tumors are common (up to 60% of cats will have more than one tumor at presentation). Unfortunately, unlike in dogs, the vast majority of feline mammary tumors in cats are malignant (85-95%), locally invasive, and have a moderate to high rate of movement to other areas of the body. Thus, full staging (as described below) is strongly recommended prior to forming a definitive treatment plan.

## What are the clinical signs of a mammary tumor?

Mammary tumors are often identified during a routine physical exam, or you may notice them at home. They usually manifest as a swelling of the mammary gland or around the mammary gland. They can be firm or soft and may be warm or painful to the touch.

## How is a mammary tumor diagnosed?

Biopsy is required to diagnose a mammary gland tumor. Prior to making definitive treatment options, full staging with an abdominal ultrasound, chest x-rays, and evaluation of the local lymph nodes are recommended to look for any spread of disease.

## How is a mammary tumor treated?

Treatment of feline mammary tumors includes both local control (removing the primary tumor and minimizing the likelihood of local recurrence) and systemic control (delaying the onset of metastatic disease). The surgery of choice is a radical unilateral mastectomy (removal of all glands on one side of the body), since this type of surgery significantly reduces the chance of local recurrence (removal of both sides is sometimes recommended if there is disease in both mammary chains).

In addition to surgery, chemotherapy is recommended to prevent or delay metastatic disease, especially if the tumor has any aggressive prognostic factors such as invasion into the vascular system, large size, and specific type of tumor. An injectable drug, carboplatin, given at 3-week intervals for a total of six treatments is recommended.

## What is the prognosis for a mammary tumor?

Despite the fact that most feline tumors are aggressive, surgical treatment and chemotherapy can result in good control of disease for several months to years (depending on the type of tumor, prognostic factors, and response to treatment). Early detection is key to providing the best possible outcome.