

# Megacolon

Megacolon in cats

# Definition

Megacolon is a term used to describe a very dilated, flaccid, incompetent colon. This usually **occurs, secondary to chronic constipation and retention of feces, but may be a congenital dysfunction**

# Causes

1. It will usually result in obstipation (inability to defecate), since feces is retained in the colon in a larger diameter than is able to pass through the pelvis.
2. Megacolon is secondary to colonic inertia (functional obstruction) or outlet obstruction (mechanical obstruction).

# Cont. Causes

3. The most common cause of colonic inertia is idiopathic (meaning unknown cause) megacolon

(Idiopathic megacolon is a disease in cats where the colon loses its normal motility and becomes progressively larger).

4. Tumors, strictures, and hernias of the rectum/anus can also contribute to the development of megacolon or constipation.

# Signs

**Cats affected with idiopathic megacolon are usually between 5–9 years old.**

Diagnosing the condition usually happens long after constipation has been present

Cats affected by megacolon may show the following signs:

# Cont. Signs

- Abdominal discomfort
- Decreased appetite
- Lethargy
- Tenesmus (straining to defecate)

# Cont. Signs

- The feces present in the colon is large and firm, and is easily palpable (a veterinarian can feel it easily). It is important that your veterinarian perform a rectal exam to check for old collapsed pelvic fractures, obstructive masses, or hernias located either inside or outside of the colon or rectum.

# Diagnosis

1. History

2. Signs

3. Physical exam

4. The diagnostic work-up should also include blood work to rule out any metabolic abnormalities

5. Abdominal ultrasound

6. colonoscopy may also be needed to determine cause of the condition



# Cont. Diagnosis

7. Radiographs (x-rays) of the abdomen.

Radiographs can confirm the presence of a large colon (Figure 1) and can be used to determine if there are any old pelvic fractures (Figures 2 and 3), masses, or spinal deformities.

Figures ( 4,5,6 and 7) show large colon in x-ray (Megacolon ) .

# Cont. Diagnosis



**Figure 1 megacolon radiograph**



**Figure 2 obstructive megacolon**

# Cont. Diagnosis

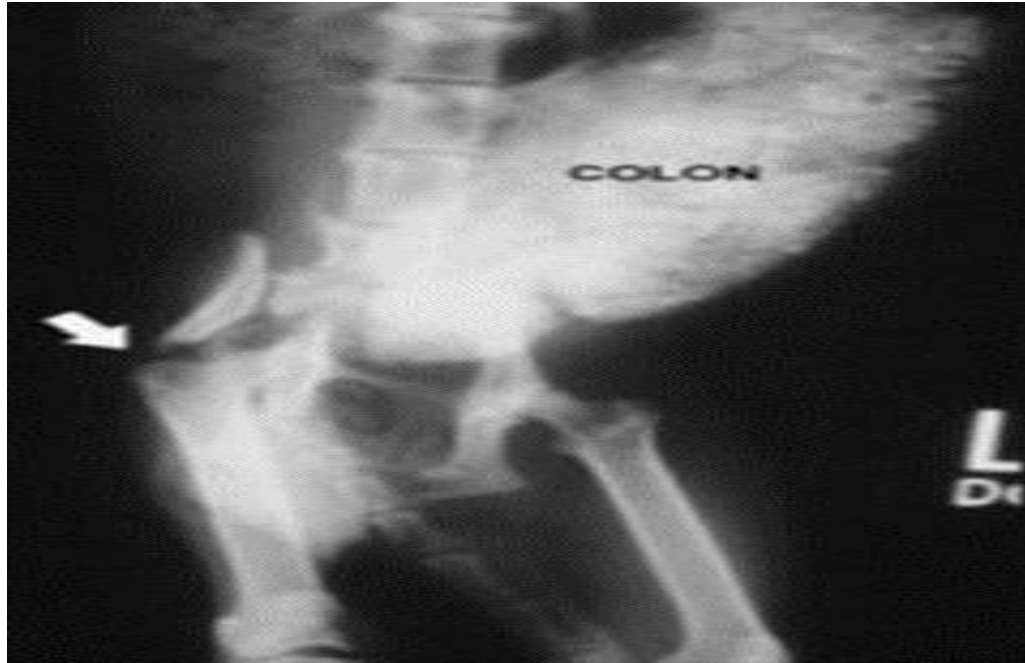


Figure 3 obstructive megacolon



Figure 4



Figure 5



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**Figure 6**



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**Figure 7**

# Surgical Treatment

- The **surgery is referred to as a “subtotal colectomy”** (removal of most, but not all, of the colon), although occasionally a **total colectomy (removal of the entire colon)** is required. Before surgery, your pet may be started on antibiotics, because the colon, containing feces, is the most bacteria-laden part of the intestinal tract. **Antibiotics help to prevent bacterial infection at surgery.**

# Cont. treatment

In subtotal colectomy, the entire affected colon is resected (cut out) and the two remaining ends are sutured back together. Failure to remove an affected portion of bowel can cause formation of a new dilated area of bowel, leading to recurrence of clinical signs of constipation and obstipation.

# Complications

1. Leak at anastamosis
2. Postop Enterocolitis
3. Constipation
4. Incontinence



# Postoperative Care

Antibiotics are often continued and cats are closely monitored for infection.

**Soft stools and occasionally diarrhea can occur for the first few months after surgery.** Progressively, the stools become more formed, but rarely ever become normal.

Rarely, cats require a second surgery if not enough colon was removed the first time

Thanks