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## Old cat staring into space

Hi everyone. I have a 20-year-old female cat that seems to sleep all the time. About 20 hours a day. I also notice that when she's awake, she stares into space. She does this while she is on my lap, before she gets out of bed, in front of food and water; it looks like she's doing it a lot! I noticed a day ago that she doesn't really want to follow me around anymore. She just sleeps in her bed. Usually in the morning she would wait for me in the kitchen for food, but for the second day in a row she has not. She will, when she is hungry though, get out of bed to go eat and then go straight back to bed. She is a very temperamental mental cat, so when I pick her up at times she murmurs at me, this is normal for her to do this, always have; I put her down, she seems to stare out into the room again, looks like she's out of it, so about 10-20 seconds later snaps out of it. But she definitely does this on and off a lot. Could this be because she's older? If anyone can know why can you tell me, or have any suggestions? She has an appointment with the vet this afternoon. Glad you have a veterinary appointment - recently I've read that in older cats staring into space can be a symptom of kitty Alzheimer's (I think it was a better term for that, though). I'm glad your cat has such a loving mother to help her through her golden years and hope your vet can give you some advice and a good diagnosis. I lost Damita last night, she wanted to do the same. She had been doing it for many years, she was blind. Let us know what the vet says. I hope she'll be okay. Stripe did it with End Stage Crf then went into a coma and had to be Pts. Is Vet thought it was a stroke at first, but then they said it was from Crf. maybe it's the cat version of Parkinson's deceased? sounds like seizures too, but I do not know if cats have such seizures. Originally written by darlili Glad you have a veterinary appointment - recently I've read that in older cats staring into space can be a symptom of kitty Alzheimer's (I think it was a better term for that, though). I'm glad your cat has such a loving mother to help her through her golden years and hope your vet can give you some advice and a good diagnosis. My veterinarian calls this a general cognitive disorder. My 17-year-old had the same problem. It can be caused only by old age (the brain synapses do not fire as quickly as they did when young), or can be medically based as a small stroke or brain tumor. Most cognitive disorders can not be diagnosed accurately without invasive procedures such as a biopsy. If you find out she's not using the trash can, she may have forgotten where it is. The same goes for food and water. If she becomes truly forgetful, you may want to narrow her world and start moving things closer to the places where she likes to sleep. It sounds like your baby is simply in golden years. You and your vet need to keep an eye on her right now. Do you have Your super-senior cat goes through some personality and behavior changes? It's not uncommon for me to hear from clients that their aging cat has started prowling the house late at night, yowling desolate, or that he's being lost in corners, standing and staring as if he's wondering why he's there. Even more troublesome: Sometimes he forgets to use the trash can, even if he's right next to it. When cats grow old, we see more than physiological changes. Scientists have not formally defined cognitive dysfunction syndrome (CDS) - senility to you and me - in cats, but the condition apparently exists. Cats with CDS are usually more than 12 years old and usually show certain signs. The abbreviation DISH helps us recognize signs of CDS in cats. D is for disorientation. Cats with CDS often go aimlessly, stare at walls, get stuck in corners, seem to be lost in their own home or lose their balance and fall. I'm for interactions. If your cat used to greet you at the door with a happy mrrrp, but now looks confused when you walk in, there's a change worth adding. Another sign to look out for: a cat that was previously a lap lover but which now shows less interest in seeking out a cuddle. S is to sleep. Cats that once slept through the night can roam and vocalize, keeping everyone else awake with them. H is for house training, which often goes by the wayside, not for medical reasons or because the trash can has not been cleaned to the cat's satisfaction, but because he just forgot. Before assuming that your cat has lost mind, take him in for a veterinary visit to rule out medical conditions such as hyperthyroidism (an overactive thyroid), hypertension (high blood pressure), brain tumors, urinary tract infections and liver or kidney disease. Some of these may cause characters that mimic CDS. Some can be treated with medication, which will be a relief for you and your cat. If your cat is diagnosed with CDS, there are things you can do to help him. You can put in place new routines and limitations that will help him adjust. In addition, some supplements and medications may also be effective. If your cat is disoriented, try limiting access to stairs or to certain parts of the house. Keep the doors closed so he doesn't go into the closet or behind the toilet or anywhere where he might not be able to get out. Create interactive routines to keep your cat's mind active. Start feeding him on a schedule, so he'll look forward to the time with you. Even if you usually leave food out for him, you can start a new routine that involves giving him a special treat at certain times of the day. You can also schedule a few minutes of clapping or playing with a favorite toy. Google+ According to the American Pet Products Association (APPA), about 94 million cats currently live in U.S. homes, up from 85 million in 2016. Much of this impressive increase, no doubt, stems from the joy that an increasing number of comes from having a around the house. But the dramatic population increase can also be attributed to the fact that cats generally live longer today than they usually did in the past. As a result of improved home care, better nutrition, advances in veterinary medicine, and so on, it is not uncommon for a cat to live to the mature age of 20 or 21 years - the equivalent of age 96 to 100 in a human. There is a downside to this good news, however. As cats get older, they become increasingly susceptible to the onset of disorders associated with aging. As the years go by, the organs gradually function less efficiently, for example, and the strength of the immune system decreases naturally. Among the most disturbing, and in some respects most confusing, of age-related feline disorders is cognitive dysfunction, a confusing, gradually debilitating condition whose signs are similar to those associated with people

with Alzheimer's disease and senile dementia. Behavioral signs of cognitive dysfunction tend to become clearly noticeable in cats 10 years of age or older. The signs include spatial disorientation; wandering away from home to uncharted territory; lack of interest in playing; excessive sleep; altered cycles of sleep and wakefulness; long periods of staring blankly into the room or on walls; indifference to food and water; urination and feces outside the trash can; and seemingly unsolicited episodes of high vocalization, often in the middle of the night. Some of the bizarre behavior can be attributed to the gradual impact of a prolonged physical condition that worsens as a cat grows old or to diseases commonly found in older cats. The pain of arthritis, for example, can intensify over the years and cause a former athletic cat to slow down dramatically as the years go by. Kidney failure can affect the behavior of the trash can by causing excessive urination and soiling of the trash can, which causes some discerning cats to find alternative places to eliminate. Arthritis can also hinder the cat's ability to get into the trash can in time. Night-time vocalizing is relatively common in hyperthyroid cats or cats with hypertension, and hypertension can also cause retinal detachment and blindness, leading to anxiety and confusion. Gradually painful periodontal disease can discourage the cat from visiting his food bowl with the same enthusiasm it showed at a younger age. Signs of cognitive dysfunction can also be traced to a neurological disorder, according to Alexander de Lahunta, DVM, emeritus professor of anatomy at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. If I examine a cat, he says, and it acts as if it's in a world of its own, not responding to me, stepping in a circle, or getting in a corner and just staying there, I'd consider it to be a prosencephalon problem. Prosencephalon, he explains, includes the largest part of the brain, cerebrum. This area controls the cat's response to vision and hearing, and such vital functions as sleeping and eating. Irregular behavior stemming from that part of the brain, explains Dr. de Lahunta, can be caused by a number of physical problems, such as tissue inflammation, tumors, trauma or a metabolic disease. If magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and analysis of cerebrospinal fluid fail to reveal a physical problem in the brain, says Dr. de Lahunta, then the problem is probably best treated by an animal behaviorist or veterinary psychiatrist. After other potentially causative conditions, such as hyperthyroidism and kidney disease, are excluded, a veterinarian may prescribe an anti-anxiety drug, such as fluoxetine, to curb some of the alarming signs of cognitive dysfunction. (A drug called L-deprenyl has been proven successful in improving brain function in dogs, but has not yet been approved for use in cats.) Animal behavior experts note that cat owners can play a significant role in delaying the progress of feline senility and associated disabilities. Among their suggestions: feed an aging cat a diet rich in vitamin E and antioxidants, substances that are believed to retard the effects of aging; avoid bringing another animal into the household whose presence can be stressful for the cat; and make sure that trash cans are conveniently accessible, with low sides for easy access. If the older cat has difficulty walking up and down stairs, give ramps as needed throughout the house. And be sure to take the cat to a veterinarian for routine checkups so that health problems are identified in their early stages, when they are most treated. Updated July 2018 2018

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