

Pectus Excavatum

What is Pectus Excavatum?

Pectus excavatum (PE) also known as “Funnel Chest” is characterized by deformity of the sternum and associated cartilage that results in narrowing of the chest.

Causes of the Disease

The cause of PE is unknown but it is thought to be a congenital deformity. No breed or sex predisposition has been identified

What Pectus Excavatum can mean to the Cat

The disease may be classified as mild, moderate or severe based on radiographic measurements of the chest.

Mildly affected kittens typically have no clinical signs and do not require intervention.

Severely affected kittens may have difficulty breathing, have difficulty exercising and failure to thrive.

A heart murmur may be present. This can be due to congenital disease or secondary to abnormal positioning of the heart because of the sternal deformity.

Physical Exam Findings

Many patients with PE are asymptomatic, but some have varied amount of difficulty with breathing and/or cardiac abnormalities at birth or that develop shortly afterwards.

A history of breathing difficulty, lack of energy, cyanosis, recurrent respiratory infections, coughing, vomiting, anorexia, and inspiratory stridor may be present.

On examination, a sternal deformity is usually palpated. Other clinical exam abnormalities may include tachypnea (fast breathing), dyspnea (difficulty breathing), cardiac murmurs, cardiac arrhythmias, and cyanosis.

Treatment / Management:

Patients that are asymptomatic may require no therapy. Some cats with PE may have no respiratory or cardiac abnormalities for years, even without treatment.

Therapy may be indicated for severe defects or for secondary respiratory and cardiac abnormalities.

Occasionally surgery is required for severe cases. Surgery involves splinting the sternum which results in increasing the size of the chest.

Prognosis

Prognosis is excellent for cats with mild PE who have no respiratory or cardiac abnormalities.