

# How to talk to clients about SDMA results and kidney disease

## Example Dialogue

This is an example of a discussion that might take place over the phone as a follow-up to a yearly preventive care appointment in which results from basic blood work show increased SDMA, normal creatinine, and inappropriate urinetispecific gravity.

Preparing for parasite screening during upcoming regular checkup:	
Pet owner:	Hello.
Veterinarian:	Dr. Robertson is calling <pet owner> about the recent test results from Harper’s wellness visit.
Pet owner:	Hi Dr. Robertson.
Veterinarian:	Overall, she has a lot of reassuring normal findings that are pretty similar to last year’s test results.  There is a bit of a surprise on her kidney tests. She does have an increased blood test result that suggests a change in her kidney function. When we compare this test result to her other kidney tests that are high-normal and to her urine sample that is not as concentrated as we expect for a kitty, it’s likely that she has early kidney disease.
Pet owner:	Is that bad?
Veterinarian:	The good news is that Harper seems to be feeling great. Her physical examination was normal and her weight is stable. These increased values indicate her kidneys are not working as well as they should be.  Since we are discovering this early, before Harper feels bad, it’s likely that she’s going to continue to do well for several years. Chronic kidney disease is very common in cats, so we are always on the lookout for it, and we have a lot of experience managing the problem. There are some proven strategies that we can use to slow down the progression of this disease in most cats.
Pet owner:	Oh! Well, I’m glad you found it early then. What should we do?
Veterinarian:	First, I have a few questions for you. Have you seen any different behaviors lately? Is Harper using the litter box more or drinking more water? Or are there days where she doesn’t eat as well?
Pet owner:	I haven’t really noticed anything unusual with her eating and drinking. It seems the same. The litter box might have bigger clumps in it, but I’m not sure.
Veterinarian:	I would like for us to develop a plan together to investigate this further. We’ll look for any treatable causes of kidney disease or complicating factors that might make it worse. There are a few more tests to consider:  Typically, we start with a urine culture and sensitivity test to look for a bacterial urinary tract infection. Her urinalysis did not show many white blood cells, which makes it less likely that she has a kidney infection, but because the urine is not very concentrated, I’d still like to check. We don’t want to miss a condition that can be easily treated.  Since the remainder of the sterile urine sample that was collected for urinalysis is still being held at the lab, we can easily order a urine culture. Ideally, we want to submit that request for culture when the sample is still fresh, so our timing today is still good.  Since high blood pressure is pretty common with kidney disease and can make it worse, I’d like to see Harper again soon to measure her blood pressure.  Also, I recommend that we schedule an ultrasound to take a closer look at the kidneys for any evidence of a kidney infection or kidney stones that might be causing some partial blockage or predisposing her to kidney infection. At the very least, we can use all of this information as a baseline in case Harper ever gets really sick.
Pet owner:	Oh, that sounds expensive. Is the ultrasound really necessary?

Veterinarian:	An ultrasound will give us the most complete look at her kidneys. With a less expensive x-ray, we can make a good determination about the presence of kidney stones. But we can't really gauge the possibility of infection or obstruction. The ultrasound is still my strong preference.
Pet owner:	Oh, okay. I do want her to have what's best. She is really an important member of our family. Let's schedule the ultrasound.
Veterinarian:	Excellent; I think that's a good choice. Once we have the results of the imaging, urine culture, and blood pressure, we can develop a custom plan to optimize Harper's kidney health and guard against the disease getting worse. If we don't find any underlying causes to address, then we may focus on some minor diet changes and making sure she gets plenty of water to drink. Don't worry I have tips and tricks to help you with that.  The good news is that it's still early and with regular monitoring visits and proper care I really feel like Harper can do well.
Pet owner:	Okay, I will bring her in.
Veterinarian:	I will transfer you to our receptionist to schedule the appointment for next week. She will also will follow-up via email with materials that you can share with your family about kidney disease and next steps. I understand this is a lot to take in, we will spend some time at your follow-up appointment answering any questions you may have.
Pet owner:	Perfect, see you then.
Veterinarian:	See you then, and if you have any questions in the meantime <a href="http://pethealthnetwork.com">pethealthnetwork.com</a> is an excellent resource or you can always call and ask to speak to me.