

Internal Medicine – What to Expect

Board-certified Internal Medicine (IM) specialists assess patients who have complicated medical problems or are not responding to current therapy. They focus on complex cases that involve multiple body systems along with metabolic, immune-mediated and infectious diseases that are unusual or difficult to manage and require advanced diagnostics, monitoring and/or therapies.

At Veterinary Specialty Center (VSC), our IM specialists are experienced in endoscopic procedures involving the nasal passages; intestinal, respiratory, and urogenital tracts; as well as retrieval of ingested foreign objects. They perform minimally invasive procedures including urethral, ureteral and tracheal stenting and ultrasound-guided aspirates and biopsies. We are one of the few veterinary hospitals offering plasmapheresis, hemodialysis and hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT).

Our internists work in conjunction with VSC's other specialties including surgery, neurology, cardiology, radiology, oncology and emergency and critical care to best determine the diagnostic procedures and treatments your pet will need.

Initial consultation - Your IM appointment will start with a consultation, which includes a physical examination of your pet, review of all information sent by your primary care veterinarian and discussion of the pertinent history. Your internist will discuss your pet's condition, diagnostic tests, treatment options, and prognosis based on various diagnoses. Prior to any treatment, a patient care plan will be provided. We understand that each pet is unique and will work with you to find the best treatment option for your pet and family situation. During this time you will have an opportunity to ask questions about the benefits and risks of the procedures, follow-up, and expected outcome.

Appointments - IM work ups can be lengthy, and your initial consultation may take several hours or more if advanced testing is required. Sometimes an overnight stay is needed, particularly if anesthesia or more advanced procedures are required.

For recheck appointments we recommend calling several weeks in advance as appointment time's book quickly.

Fasting Instructions - To obtain accurate laboratory results and diagnostic images and for the safety of your pet during and after an anesthetic procedure, your pet needs to have an empty stomach. Please feed your pet a normal dinner but **NO FOOD** 12 hours prior to your appointment. Water is okay.

Special fasting instructions - Pediatric patients (less than 6 months of age) should not be fasted for more than 6 hours. Diabetic patients need to fast 12 hours prior to the appointment and receive half their insulin dose with no food the morning of the appointment. Please bring your pet's insulin in its regular bottle. For both pediatric and diabetic patients, water is okay.

Medications - We recommend that you bring your pet's medication(s) in the original bottle(s) for your appointment. This allows for verification of dosages.

Elimination - Your pet may follow their normal routine for urinating and defecating prior to arriving at VSC. Please try to keep your pet from eliminating prior to walking into VSC as we may need to collect a sterile urine sample.

Discharge information - When your pet is ready to leave the hospital, a veterinary nurse will review all of the home care instructions with you. You will be provided with a copy of the detailed discharge instructions to take home. If you have additional questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask, call or email us anytime.

Follow-up care - While your primary care veterinarian can handle many aspects of your pet's care, there are certain conditions and complex cases that require the ongoing management of a specialist. The IM team will discuss with you whether it is appropriate to follow-up directly with VSC or your primary care veterinarian. All routine preventative care should continue with your primary care veterinarian.

If you choose to follow-up with your primary care veterinarian instead, we are able to consult directly with them via fax or email if requested. Our specialist will communicate next steps with your primary veterinarian within 3-5 business days of receipt of their communication. Your primary veterinarian will then discuss these results and our recommendations with you.

If you prefer direct contact with our IM team or if you or your veterinarian feels there is a pressing concern about your pet's condition, do not hesitate to make a follow-up appointment at VSC.

Questions or concerns - For any non-urgent questions, you will be asked to leave a message for the IM team or you can email them directly at im@vetspecialty.com. If you have any urgent medical concerns outside the Internal Medicine Department's normal business hours, please call our Emergency and Critical Care Department 24 hours a day **(847.459.7535)**.

Patient care plan - Once you consent to a course of treatment, you will be presented with a patient care plan that includes an approximate range for the cost of diagnostics and care. You are required to leave 100% of the low end of the plan when your pet is admitted to the hospital or at the time of service.

Payment options - Accepted payment options include cash, check, and credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express).

We also offer financing options through Cherry, which are payment plans that allow you to prioritize your pet's treatment now and manage the expenses over time with smaller, predictable monthly payments.

- **Easy Pre-qualification:** You can pre-qualify for a plan in seconds without impacting your credit score. You pay nothing until you're ready to proceed with care for your pet.
- **Flexible Payment Plans:** We offer various terms to fit your budget, including options for 0% interest for up to 6 months for qualifying individuals with no deferred interest.

If you are interested in applying or have questions about how these plans work, please let a member of our team know, or you can apply online at pay.withCherry.com.

Prescription refills - To allow our staff to provide the in-depth care necessary for our hospitalized patients, we require 24 hours' notice for prescription refills. There is a \$25 fee for refills requested outside of your IM team's normal hours. Hours vary by IM doctor, Monday through Friday from 9am-4pm.

Please note that Federal Law regarding refills of controlled substances, which includes some pain and cough medicines, have made it necessary for patient's refills to be done in person. Per FDA regulations, dispensed medications may not be returned to VSC (CPG sec. 460.300).

Veterinary Specialty Center is guided by the belief that companion animals deserve state-of-the-art medical care in a kind and comforting environment. The courage of our patients, the loyalty of their human families, and the devotion of our referral veterinarians inspire our vision. It is sustained by the contributions of our compassionate, knowledgeable and dedicated staff and built upon a tradition of providing unsurpassed healthcare for animals.
