



Keeping your cat healthy through disease prevention.

What you should know about vaccinating your cat.



An ounce of prevention is often the only cure.

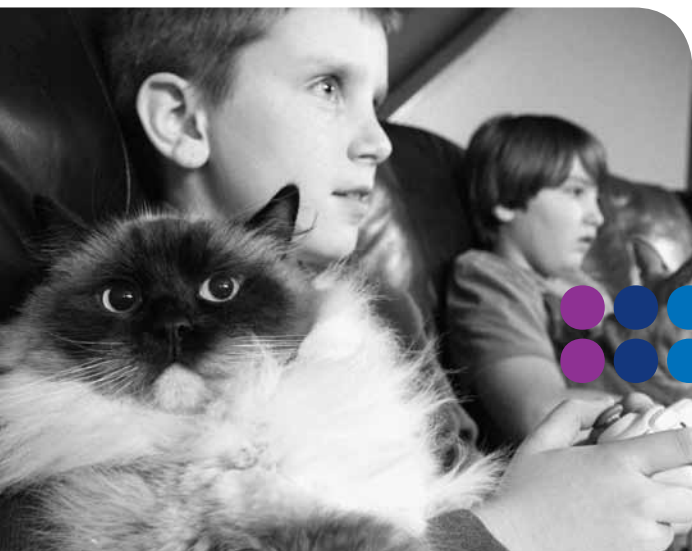
Many cat illnesses can be treated with a veterinary visit, medication, and some TLC. But many infectious diseases have no real, effective treatment. That's why there are vaccines to protect against many of them, helping your cat avoid suffering through diseases that may cause serious health problems and potentially even death. Vaccinate your cat consistently throughout its life to avoid these diseases!

When it comes to disease prevention, you're a cat's best friend.

Clearly, one of the best things you can do to help your cat live a long, healthy, happy life is vaccinate against common feline diseases. As a kitten, mother's milk provides temporary immunity from disease. After that, it's your job—with the help and advice of your veterinarian—to provide protection through vaccination.

How vaccines protect your cat.

Vaccines contain small quantities of "altered" or "killed" viruses, bacteria, or other disease-causing organisms. When administered, vaccines stimulate your cat's immune system to produce disease-fighting cells and proteins called antibodies, which help protect your cat from disease.



Vaccination: When, what, and why.

Take no chances. Vaccinate early and consistently.

At about 9 weeks old, you should begin vaccination, with “boosters” following every 3 to 4 weeks, until your kitten is at least 12 weeks of age. Stick to this timeframe to ensure your kitten develops a strong immune response. From then on, your cat either needs to be vaccinated annually or every 2 or 3 years depending on the disease that is being prevented or the type of vaccine that is being used. Your veterinarian will determine, along with your input, the right vaccination schedule for your cat.

Vaccines are your cat’s best and often only protection.

Like any prevention plan, vaccines cannot be 100% guaranteed. But when used in conjunction with proper nutrition and good sanitary conditions, vaccination is your cat’s best defense against infectious disease. Plus, when you consider the cost and stress of treating a serious illness, prevention is the obvious better choice.

You might be wondering about side effects.

Today’s vaccines are designed to be safe and effective, but occasionally there can be mild side effects, such as injection site soreness or low-grade fever. If you observe anything unusual, such as facial swelling, hives, weakness, or trouble breathing, contact your veterinarian immediately.

JUST BECAUSE
your cat may be an
INDOOR-ONLY PET
doesn’t mean
it’s safe from disease!



Diseases you should vaccinate against.

Most veterinarians believe that your cat should be protected against diseases that are most common, highly contagious, and cause serious illness. Other vaccinations may be recommended, based on your veterinarian's evaluation of risks posed by heredity, environment, and lifestyle.

Feline viral rhinotracheitis

This virus causes upper respiratory tract infection that is easily transmitted from cat to cat, so vaccination is imperative if your pet will come in contact with other cats. Signs may take the form of moderate fever, loss of appetite, sneezing, and/or eye and nasal discharges. Kittens are particularly affected, but this disease can be dangerous in any unprotected cat, as effective treatment is limited. Even if a cat recovers, it can remain a carrier for life.

Feline calicivirus

This virus is a major cause of upper respiratory tract infection. Widespread and highly contagious, its signs include fever, ulcers and blisters on the tongue, and pneumonia that can range from mild to severe. Treatment of feline calicivirus can be difficult. Even a recovered cat can continue to infect other animals, as well as experience chronic sneezing, runny eyes, and severe gum disease. Vaccination is very important.

Feline panleukopenia

Also known as feline distemper, feline panleukopenia is caused by a highly resistant virus that can survive up to 1 year outside a cat's body. Most cats will be exposed to it at some point, and infection rates in unprotected cats can run as high as 90% to 100%, making vaccination against this potentially fatal disease essential. Signs include listlessness, diarrhea, vomiting, severe dehydration, fever, and death. The vaccine is very effective in preventing the disease, but treatment is difficult and expensive.



Rabies

This incurable viral disease affects the central nervous system of almost all mammals, including humans. It spreads through contact with the saliva of infected animals through bites or any break in the skin. Many municipalities require that cats receive regular rabies vaccinations.

Feline leukemia virus (FeLV)

FeLV infection can result in many serious health problems—from cancers such as leukemia to a wide range of secondary infections. In fact, FeLV is the leading cause of death from infectious disease in North American cats. After initial exposure, a cat may show no signs for months or years. Testing is available to determine the FeLV status of your cat. If your cat is likely to come in contact with infected cats, vaccination against this potentially fatal disease is highly recommended.

Other vaccinations

Depending on your cat's lifestyle and risk factors, your veterinarian may also recommend vaccination against other infectious diseases.

- **Chlamydophila** are bacteria that infect the eyes, causing conjunctivitis. They may also infect the lungs, digestive tract, and reproductive tract. The disease is extremely contagious, especially in young kittens. Vaccination can be an important part of controlling *Chlamydophila* infection in multiple-cat environments.
- **Bordetella** are bacteria that can cause respiratory disease in cats of any age. Young kittens tend to have more severe disease. Vaccination should be done before cats enter boarding facilities or other multi-cat environments.

Getting to the veterinarian, made easier.



Don't let the "hassle" of getting your cat to the veterinarian jeopardize its health.

Getting a dog to the veterinarian can be a walk in the park. Hop in the car and you're off! Kitty, on the other hand, often seems to "know" and can react with hesitation, anxiety, even defiance. Sadly, many cat owners don't keep up with important veterinary visits and vaccinations for this reason. Cat behavior experts offer some clever and fun ways to help make getting your cat to the veterinarian easier and less stressful. After all, getting there should be half the fun, right?

TIPS for easier cat transport.¹

- **Choose a carrier that's easy to use.** A hard carrier with an easy-on, easy-off top will make getting your cat in and out easier.
- **Keep the carrier out and visible.** Keep it open and randomly toss in treats or favorite toys so your cat comes to like the idea.
- **Feed your cat in the carrier.** Start by feeding at the carrier door and gradually moving its dish inside.
- **Take mini carrier trips.** Get your cat used to travel by taking short "tours" around your home. Repeat this with longer "tours" until your cat gets used to it.
- **Move on to the car.** With your cat in the carrier, prepare for a trip. Buckle in, toss in a few treats, sit for a few minutes, chat calmly, but don't start the engine. Then go back in the house for a meal.
- **Take a test drive.** Shortly after your fed and happy cat has experienced the stationary car, take a short ride. Windows shut, calming talk, the occasional treat, and a smooth ride will help your cat get used to it.
- **Practice makes perfect.** Repeat the exercise until the process becomes easy. If, at any point your cat starts feeling anxious, simply stop and pick it up again another time.
- **If you're still having trouble and it's time to leave,** "spritz" the inside of the carrier with a cat-calming pheromone product at least 10 minutes before leaving.

Tips for a better veterinarian visit.²

The veterinary clinic can be a scary place for cats, but it doesn't have to be.

Sick, agitated dogs, cats, and other animals, in an unfamiliar place, can be a source of anxiety for your cat—and for you. But there are ways to minimize or even eliminate “stressors” and make your visit to the veterinarian easier, and even enjoyable. Here are a few helpful tips:

- **Prepare in advance.** Rehearse clinical exams at home; use calm praise and positive reinforcement through treats or other rewards. Your veterinarian can help you with this.
- **Bring along familiar scented items,** such as a favorite toy or blanket.
- **Let your veterinarian know in advance** if your cat is easily upset, so he or she can prepare accordingly.
- **In the waiting room,** try to keep your carrier away from other animals that may cause stress for your cat. Your lap is a good, safe place.
- **Remain calm and positive.** Your cat will detect your stress and may become stressed itself. Move at your cat's pace; use rewards that encourage positive behaviors.
- **Chat with your veterinarian for a few minutes.** This will allow you to relay new information, while your cat gets used to the surroundings.



Get a check-up!

Vaccinations aren't the only reason to take your cat to the veterinarian. Regular check-ups are just as important in keeping your cat in tip-top shape.

- **Kittens** should be microchipped and properly spayed/neutered
- **Adult cats** benefit from a multitude of exams and screening procedures, including but not limited to:
 - Dental exams
 - Weight and nutrition assessment
 - Blood pressure testing
 - Pre-diabetes testing
 - Testing for early kidney failure/urinalysis
 - Testing for hyperthyroidism
- **Aging cats** may have a condition that you don't recognize but your veterinarian will

Keep your cat's health in check
and MAKE IT A POINT to
follow up with your vet
for routine physical exams.

A protected cat means a happy cat. And a happy you!

You don't want anything to stand in the way of the joy and love you and your cat share. And that makes vaccination the smart and loving way to go!



For more information on better veterinarian visits, visit www.catalystcouncil.org and www.catvets.com.

References: **1.** CATegorical care: An owner's guide to America's #1 companion [patient brochure]. Catalyst Council and American Humane. Available at: <http://www.catalystcouncil.org/uploads/PDFs/AACM-CATegoricalCare-all.pdf>. Accessed August 11, 2011. **2.** Rodan I, Sundahl E, Carney H, et al. AAFP and ISFM feline-friendly handling guidelines. *J Feline Med Surg*. 2011;13:364-375.

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