

# FELINE DISEASES AND SYMPTOMS

## Feline Leukemia (FeLV)

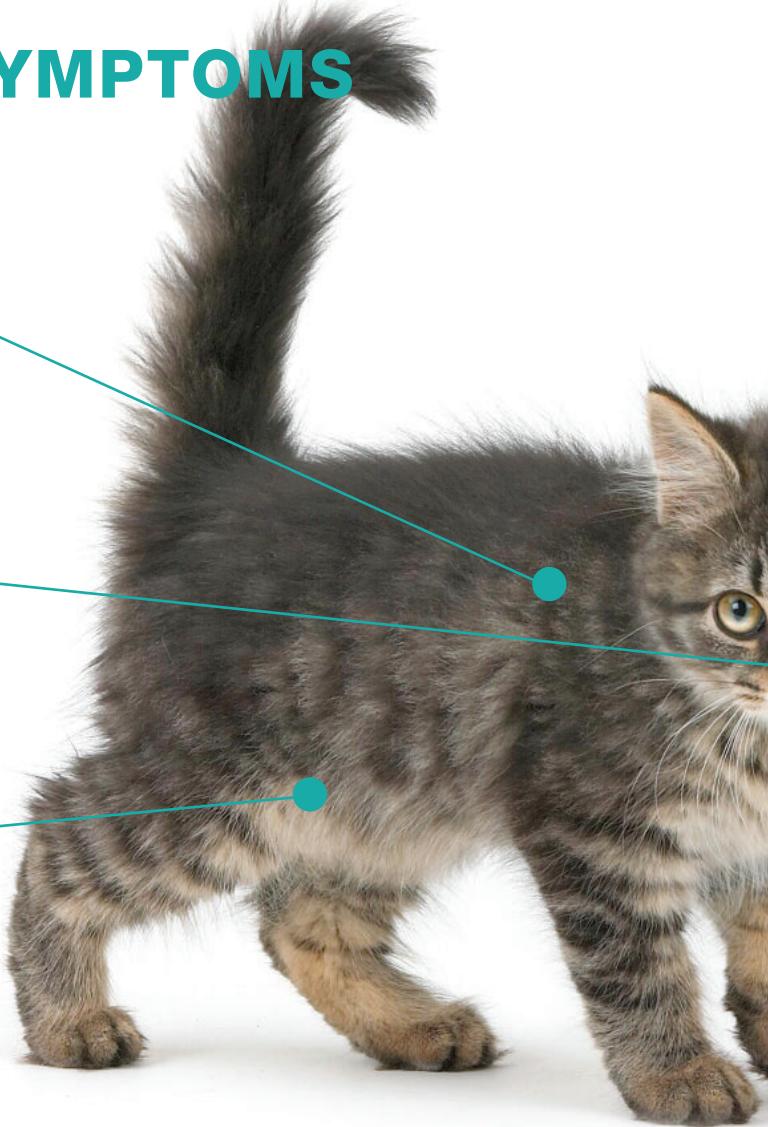
Infection with the Feline Leukemia Virus can result in a multitude of serious health problems for your cat — everything from cancerous conditions such as leukemia to a wide range of secondary infections caused by the destruction of the immune system. In fact, it is a leading cause of death in North American cats. After initial exposure to the virus, a cat may show no symptoms for months, if not years. Testing is available to determine the FeLV status of your cat. If he or she has not yet been infected, but is likely to come in contact with cats that are, vaccination against this potentially fatal disease is highly recommended.

## Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis

Just like the human common cold, the virus that causes this upper respiratory tract infection is easily transmitted from one cat to another, so vaccination is imperative if your pet will come in contact with other cats. Its symptoms may take the form of moderate fever, loss of appetite, sneezing, 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 Panleukopenia

Sometimes known as feline distemper, this disease is caused by a virus so resistant, it can survive up to one year outside a cat's body! Therefore, as most cats will be exposed to it during their lifetimes and infection rates in unprotected cats can run as high as 90% to 100%, vaccination against this potentially fatal disease is absolutely essential. Symptoms can include listlessness, diarrhea, vomiting, severe dehydration, fever and death. Happily, the vaccine itself is very effective in preventing the disease, as treatment is very difficult.



## Rabies

This incurable viral disease affects the central nervous system of almost all mammals, including humans. It is spread through contact with the saliva of infected animals (which can include skunks, foxes, raccoons and bats) through bites or any break in the skin. Vaccination will provide cats with a much greater resistance to rabies if they are exposed to the disease. You must be aware that there is no cure once it occurs. For this reason, many municipalities absolutely require that all cats receive rabies vaccinations on a regular basis. Plus, you will definitely have to provide vaccination records if you ever want to travel with your cat across the country or around the world.

## Feline Calicivirus

This virus is another major cause of upper respiratory tract infection in cats. Widespread and highly contagious, its symptoms of fever, ulcers and blisters on the tongue and pneumonia (inflammation of the lungs) can range from mild to severe, depending on the strain of virus present. Treatment of this disease can be difficult. Even if recovery does take place, a recovered cat can continue to infect other animals, as well as experience chronic sneezing, runny eyes and severe gum disease. Vaccination is therefore tremendously important.

## 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* infections in multiple-cat environments. *Chlamydophila* can be transmitted to humans by direct contact.
- **BORDETELLA** are bacteria that can cause respiratory disease in cats of any age. Young kittens tend to have more severe disease. Vaccination should be considered before cats enter boarding facilities or other multiple-cat environments.

# CAT VACCINATION GUIDE



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# VACCINATIONS: WHY & WHEN?

## Your cat counts on you for protection

One of the best things you can do to give your cat a long and healthy life is to ensure that he or she is vaccinated against common feline diseases. Your cat's mother gave her kitten immunity from disease for the first few weeks of existence by providing disease-fighting antibodies in her milk. After that period it's up to you, with the help and advice of your veterinarian, to provide that protection through vaccination.

## How do vaccines work?

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

## When should my cat be vaccinated?

Generally, the immunity that a kitten has at birth begins to diminish after 9 weeks. It is then time to begin the initial vaccinations, with boosters following every 3-4 weeks until the kitten is 12-16 weeks old. If there is too long an interval between the first vaccination and the booster, your kitten may have to undergo the series all over again.



Thereafter, your cat will require repeat vaccinations for the rest of his or her life. Of course, these are only guidelines. Your veterinarian will be able to determine the exact schedule that's right for your pet.

## Which vaccinations should my cat receive?

Most veterinarians believe that your pet should be protected against those diseases which are most common, highly contagious and which cause serious illness. Such diseases could include Feline Panleukopenia, Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Feline Calicivirus, Rabies and, depending on lifestyle, Feline Leukemia. Other vaccinations may be recommended, based on your veterinarian's evaluation of the risks posed by such factors as your cat's particular heredity, environment and lifestyle.

## How effective is vaccination?

Like any drug treatment or surgical procedure, vaccinations cannot be 100% guaranteed. However, used in conjunction with proper nutrition and acceptable sanitary conditions, vaccination is clearly your pet's best defense against disease. Plus, when you consider what treating a serious illness can cost you and your beloved cat in terms of both money and distress, prevention through vaccination definitely is the better choice.

## WHAT KIND OF CAT ARE YOU?

### Treat your pet to the expertise of your veterinarian!

Throughout his life, your cat will benefit from regular check-ups and the experience of your veterinarian — including ear, eye and dental exams. Your kitten should be microchipped, spayed or neutered and properly profiled for vaccination. Older cats may be afflicted by conditions your veterinarian can recognize and treat. Make a visit to your vet a regular part of your schedule.

Cat Profiler: Put a check-mark (✓) in the boxes which best describe your cat's lifestyle. By determining your cat's profile, we can determine the best vaccine protocol for your cat.



Are you:

- In contact with other cats and animals?
- A hunter or do you spend time outdoors?
- Likely to eat or drink from unknown sources?



Are you:

- Bad tempered?
- Nervous around people?
- A biter or scratcher and do you hiss at people?



Are you:

- Exposed to other known cats?
- Sometimes exposed to unknown cats?



Are you:

- Never exposed to any other cats, known or unknown?
- Under strict control of activities and access to unknown food or water?

### Important considerations in determining a patient's profile:

- **Geographic location** (prevalence of parasites)
- **Age and spay/neuter status** (increased close contact with unknown cats)
- **Social activity** (boarding, groomer, etc.)
- **Outdoor activity** (hunting, roaming)
- **Character** (frequent escapee)

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