



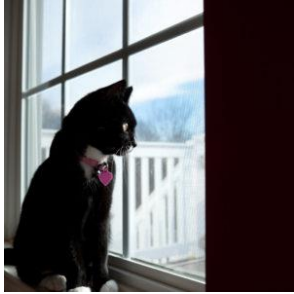
Vaccines

One of the best ways to keep your cat healthy is by ensuring they receive all of the recommended vaccinations. You should speak with your veterinarian to learn which vaccinations are recommended for your cat.

Why Does My Cat Need to be Vaccinated?

- Vaccines help protect against specific infectious diseases caused by some viruses and bacteria. They stimulate the body's immune system to destroy the organism and 'remember' it so that it can fight against infection again in the future if necessary.
- Without vaccination, your cat could become seriously ill or even die from diseases that his immune system is unable to fight effectively on its own.
- The use of vaccines has prevented death and disease in millions of cats. In addition, vaccines protect you from disease, such as rabies, that could be transmitted from your cat. Some diseases are easier to vaccinate against than others. For example, vaccination is very effective against feline parvovirus infection (panleukopenia) but does not completely protect against respiratory virus infections.
- However, cats vaccinated against respiratory tract infections generally have milder illness than if they hadn't been vaccinated and are far less likely to die from the disease.
- The vaccines your cat needs will depend on his health status, age, lifestyle, and what diseases are common in your geographical area.
- In some areas, [rabies](#) vaccination is required by law to protect both animals and people.
- If you travel with your cat, your veterinarian may advise vaccination against diseases in the areas you visit.
- Your veterinarian is the best person to evaluate your cat's individual needs and determine which vaccines are necessary and how often they should be given.

Do Indoor Cats Need All of the Vaccinations?



- It is important to remember that even cats living totally indoors require regular vaccination as they may be exposed to diseases in many circumstances (such as travel or boarding, interaction with other cats, the addition of a new cat to the home, and even viruses carried on your clothing).
- All indoor cats need to be vaccinated against FRVCP, an acronym for the standard cat vaccine, also called “the feline distemper vaccine,” as these are viruses that people can transmit on their hands or clothing.
- Indoor cats have limited exposure with other people or animals, so their immune systems do not get regular “boosting” by seeing other cats. This may put them at greater risk when they are exposed to cat viruses we bring home on our hands or clothing.
- Indoor cats should be vaccinated against [FeLV](#) until after their first year booster which is then based on risk of exposure.
- Indoor cats need to be vaccinated against rabies if they live in a region or in a location where rabies vaccination is mandatory. Indoor cats can still be exposed to disease.
- If your cat stays inside most of the time, but is permitted to go out once in awhile, he is not considered indoor-only.
- In multi-cat households where some cats are permitted outside or even if feline “guests” are permitted into the home, risk is increased.
- Discuss the specifics of your household with your veterinarian in order to develop an individualized healthcare plan for your cat.

Even indoor cats need regular vaccinations since they might be exposed to diseases carried home on your clothes.

Why Does My Kitten Need a Series of More Than One Vaccine?

- Newborn kittens depend on their mothers not just for food and warmth, but also for protection against infectious diseases. The first few times they nurse, kittens get antibodies from their mother’s milk that will help to keep them safe for a few weeks to several months.
- This immunity provided by “maternally derived antibodies” (MDA) is protective while a kitten’s own immune system is immature. However, if the antibody levels decrease before the kitten has developed his own immunity, gaps in protection will occur, leaving the kitten susceptible to disease.
- While the kitten has high levels of MDA, his immune system will not respond optimally to vaccination. Since it’s not possible to predict for each kitten when MDA has decreased adequately to allow an effective response to vaccination, your veterinarian will give your cat a series of vaccinations.
- An incomplete series of kitten vaccinations may leave your kitten vulnerable to infection, so it is important to follow your veterinarian’s recommendations and vaccinate up to at least 16 weeks of age.

How Often Does My Cat Need to be Re-Vaccinated?

Many things need to be taken into consideration when deciding how often your cat needs to be vaccinated. These include:

- health status
- age and lifestyle of the cat
- how long a specific vaccine provides protection for (“duration of immunity”)
- how likely the cat is to be exposed to the infectious agent
- how dangerous this agent might be
- licensing regulations in each country

This is why re-vaccination intervals may vary, both from cat to cat, home to home, and with different diseases. Your veterinarian will be able to customize a vaccination schedule for your cat.

Do All Cats Need Annual Boosters?

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- Once cats have had their first series of vaccinations against panleukopenia (also known as “distemper”) and two upper respiratory viruses herpesvirus and calicivirus (FVRCP or DRCP vaccine), they need to be boosted a year later.
- For kittens, the first series can start as early as 6 weeks of age, with boosters being given every 3-4 weeks until 16-20 weeks of age. After that, cats need to be boosted every 3 years.
- Adult cats whose vaccination history is unknown should receive a single FVRCP followed by a booster one year later before starting the 3 year revaccination schedule.
- FeLV vaccination similarly requires a booster 1 year after the initial series and boosted every 2 years for cats at low risk of exposure. Discuss your cat’s exposure risk with your veterinarian.
- Rabies vaccination is a core vaccine in regions in which rabies is prevalent or where the vaccination is legally mandated. As with other vaccines, after the initial dose has been administered, a subsequent booster is required a year later. Thereafter, boosting interval will depend on the vaccine.
- All cats should be examined by a veterinarian at least once a year and more often after 10-12 years of age or once any chronic condition has been identified.

What are the Risks of Vaccination?

- The benefits of vaccination greatly outweigh possible risks. Just as in children, following vaccination your cat may experience mild and short-lived reactions, such as poor appetite, lethargy, and fever that resolve without treatment.
- Any symptoms that persist for more than a day or two should be discussed with your veterinarian. Rarely, more serious allergic reactions can occur and include vomiting, diarrhea, facial swelling, or difficulty breathing. These serious reactions appear within minutes or hours of vaccination and require immediate veterinary care.
- Another uncommon reaction is a tumor at the injection site that develops months or years after vaccination. Talk to your veterinarian about any persistent lumps or swellings at injection sites