

Kitty Kare

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Disease Prevention

There are many diseases in cats that can cause major illnesses and death. Vaccines are given to protect your feline friend against these diseases. Depending on your cat's living situation, Dr. Flanary can help you determine what vaccines your kitty will need to keep it healthy.

A kitten's immune system in an early developmental stage is not ready to fight off disease. They need a series of vaccinations to help them do the fighting. Once protection has been established, yearly booster vaccines are needed to maintain protection against diseases. Vaccinations are certainly important reasons to visit the veterinarian each year, but they aren't the only reason. Routine physical check-ups are essential in evaluating the health and condition of your pet.

The information gathered at each exam becomes part of your pet's medical history and can be critical if an emergency or sudden illness arises. Dr. Flanary will check your cat from nose to tail. They can assess the overall condition of your pet and check for abnormalities such as heart problems, enlarged lymph nodes, skin problems, weight changes and parasite checks. The earlier problems are detected the easier they usually are to treat.

What is FVRCP?

An FVRCP is a vaccination that protects your cat against a variety of diseases. FVRCP stands for Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Chlamydia, Panleukopenia.

Rhinotracheitis is a widespread severe upper-respiratory virus that poses a serious threat to cats of all ages, and is especially devastating to kittens. Once exposed, the virus can cause symptoms on and off for the cat's lifetime. Symptoms include loss of appetite, fever, tearing, eye and nose discharge, and coughing.

Calicivirus is another major upper-respiratory threat that is highly contagious. Symptoms include fever, pneumonia, and painful ulcers on the tongue, mouth, and/or lips. Recovered cats can develop permanent ulcers on their gums or shed the virus to other cats.

Chlamydia is a virus that causes an infection of the mucous membranes of the eyes and nose. Symptoms include conjunctivitis, excessive tearing, sneezing, salivation, and coughing. The Chlamydia virus is potentially transmissible to humans, resulting in eye infections.

Panleukopenia is also known as feline distemper. Symptoms include fever, loss of appetite, vomiting, depression, diarrhea, and other complications which almost always result in death. All of these viruses are contacted from other cats. An FVRCP vaccine can prevent transmission to your cat.

Rabies and "Kennel Cough"

Any cat that spends time outdoors may be exposed to wild animals that can transmit Rabies. Rabies is a fatal disease in which there is no cure. This disease is commonly spread by contact with saliva of infected animals through bites or a break in the skin. State laws require that cats be vaccinated against Rabies because it also poses a threat to humans.

Feline "kennel cough" is caused by *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, a highly contagious bacteria. A research study has indicated that over 85 percent of cats have been exposed to this disease. Symptoms are similar to those of other upper-respiratory infections, including sneezing, runny eyes, and loss of appetite. The vaccine to protect your cat is administered intra-nasally, which means no needles are used so it is painless. Your cat should receive the "kennel cough" vaccine even if it never ventures outside because it can be spread through the air.



“Be aware of the dangers and protect your cats.”

FIV and Feline Leukemia

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukemia are viruses similar in cats to what HIV (AIDS) is to people. They can lie dormant in cats for years before showing any symptoms. Upon becoming active, the virus can suppress the immune system, allowing infections that can normally be controlled by the body to cause a severe and debilitating disease.

Various kinds of cancer and blood diseases are much more common in cats that are infected with either virus.

- Early signs of infection are often subtle and are commonly seen in cats that are simply not feeling well. These signs include: Decreased appetite
- Decreased grooming
- Decreased energy

As infection becomes more advanced, you may see the following signs:

- Marked loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Weakness
- Pale gums
- Mouth sores
- Diarrhea
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Abscesses
- Wounds that don't heal

FIV and Leukemia are typically spread when one cat bites another and through sexually transmission. It is also spread when the saliva or urine of an infected cat comes in contact with another cat. This can happen when cats groom each other, or when they share food and water bowls or litter boxes. Kittens born to infected mothers are commonly infected as well.

Remember, healthy cats can carry FIV or Leukemia and can spread the viruses to other cats. In some cats, signs of disease may not become apparent until weeks, months or even years after they first become infected.

Testing Is Easy!

Should you have your cat tested for FIV and Feline Leukemia? Absolutely! Early detection of infection will help you not only make healthy choices for your cat, but also allows you to prevent spreading infection to other cats. A small blood sample is all that is needed to diagnose infection of both diseases. You will get results in just minutes.

Testing is important in all of the following situations: Your cat has never been tested before; if your cat is sick; when cats and kittens are newly adopted; if your cat has recently been exposed to an infected cat; if your cat has been exposed to a cat that may be infected; prior to your cat receiving vaccinations. Without testing, there is no way to know whether your cat is infected. Without a diagnosis, your cat cannot receive proper health care.

We, along with the American Association of Feline Practitioners, recommend that all cats and kittens should be tested. Not only can you help your cat live a happy, healthy life, but you can also help prevent the spread of these two diseases.

If your cat's test results are negative, we can protect it through a vaccination program. If your cat is positive for infection, we can teach you how to keep it as healthy as possible, and also how to keep from spreading the diseases to other cats.

Is Your Feline Friend at Risk?

FIV and Feline Leukemia kill more cats than any other disease. Your cat is at risk if you can check off one or more of the following:

My cat is at risk because:

- It has never been tested for FIV or Leukemia
- It has never been vaccinated for FIV or Leukemia
- It is allowed outside the house
- It is a male cat
- It fights with other cats
- It has not been neutered
- It lives in a multi-cat household
- It is an indoor cat, but it has contact with an outdoor cat
- It has shown any of the symptoms mentioned in article on page 2
- It has an unknown or untested mother
- It is from a cattery, pet store, or breeder
- It has ever had a bite wound

Testing is an important step toward keeping your cat healthy. See the staff at Flanary Veterinary Clinic concerning your kitten / cat today.