

Vaccinations and Boosters

Making sure vaccinations are current is the key to keeping your cat healthy.

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Vaccinations are one of the most misunderstood components of the feline health program. For most cats there are four vaccines to consider: FVRCP (a combination vaccine against several respiratory, gastrointestinal and systemic viral infections), FeLV (designed to prevent the dreaded feline leukemia virus), FIP (an intranasal vaccine against feline infectious peritonitis) and rabies (required by law in certain locales). Current recommendations include a series of injections for new kittens and adult cats with unknown vaccination histories, followed by annual boosters. Rabies vaccines may be given every three years. Be sure to consult your veterinarian about your cat's vaccination schedule.

Benefits of vaccination must be weighed against the possible side effects and anticipated exposure to the diseases in question. Considerations of vaccine-induced sarcomas, autoimmune diseases, allergic reactions and other possible negative effects on the immune system are leading to an ever-increasing debate of the necessity and prudence of annual revaccination-veterinarians will keep cat owners posted as new information becomes available. Because of the currently incurable nature of several of the more common feline diseases, special considerations might need to be made; you should contact your veterinarian regarding these issues. Vets currently recommend FVRCP and FeLV for indoor-only cats and add FIP and rabies vaccinations for cats with outdoor exposure. It is important for owners to remember that no vaccine provides 100-percent protection. Eliminating exposure is the best prevention.

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