

## Infection Alert

**Your cat's cold can be deadly without timely treatment. Learn the facts about herpes virus and calicivirus.**

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Posted: Thu Mar 4 00:00:00 PST 2004

Cats that recover from the respiratory illness can develop a chronic infection in the oral cavity, shedding FCV continuously from the mouth and infecting other cats. Some cats stop shedding the virus weeks to months after the initial infection, but a few shed the virus their entire lives.

"Oral ulcers lead to secondary bacterial infections," said Janet Foley, DVM, an infectious-disease specialist at the University of California at Davis veterinary school. "They are also painful, so cats stop eating."

"Mortality in young cats is associated with delay in treatment," Foley said. However, as opposed to other respiratory viruses, "there are the least number of treatment options for this virus."

Vaccinate your cat for herpes and calicivirus starting at 8 weeks of age. They receive boosters as adults, but the specific vaccine protocol depends on your cat's living situation. Vaccinate indoor-only cats or those with limited outdoor exposure less often than free-roaming cats, usually every 3 years or more. Current vaccines do not protect against the hemorrhagic strain of calicivirus.

Bottom line: Early identification and treatment can make all the difference in your cat's cold. Don't hesitate to seek veterinary help.