

## AIDS vs. FIV

**FIV-positive kitten may just carry maternal antibodies. Either way, he's due for neutering.**

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Q. My 6-month-old kitten is HIV-positive. I'm concerned that if I decide to neuter my kitten, he might die because of the AIDS virus.

I know about the undesirable traits an adult male cat exhibits, such as spraying and aggressive behavior with other toms. However, my kitten will be raised strictly indoors, so he does not expose other cats to the virus.

My veterinarian suggested that once my kitten is neutered, I should feed him canned cat food, because it contains more water and is leaner than conventional dry foods. My veterinarian also said to keep my cat very lean, as research shows that excess weight aggravates neutered cats.

Is there an alternative for neutering to eliminate spraying and aggression? In the past, my neutered cats developed feline urinary syndrome after surgery. I've spent hundreds of dollars on food, medication and veterinary visits, in hope of proper urination. After losing several cats to such urinary problems, I cannot go through this agony again with my new kitten.

A. Your cat has FIV (feline immunodeficiency virus), not HIV an important distinction. Although the viruses are from a similar family (retroviruses), FIV is specific to felines, and HIV is specific to humans. This also means that your cat cannot transmit the disease to you or any other human. He can, however, transmit it to other cats, so I commend your socially responsible stance of keeping him indoors.

As it turns out, maternal antibody for FIV can persist in kittens sometimes a bit beyond 6 months of age. When I have a kitten test positive at an early age for FIV, I recommend a second test 8 weeks later. If he is negative on the second test, then in all likelihood the first test was only picking up that persistent maternal antibody, and he is not infected with the virus. This scenario is not true with the other commonly recognized retroviruses, such as FeLV (feline leukemia virus).