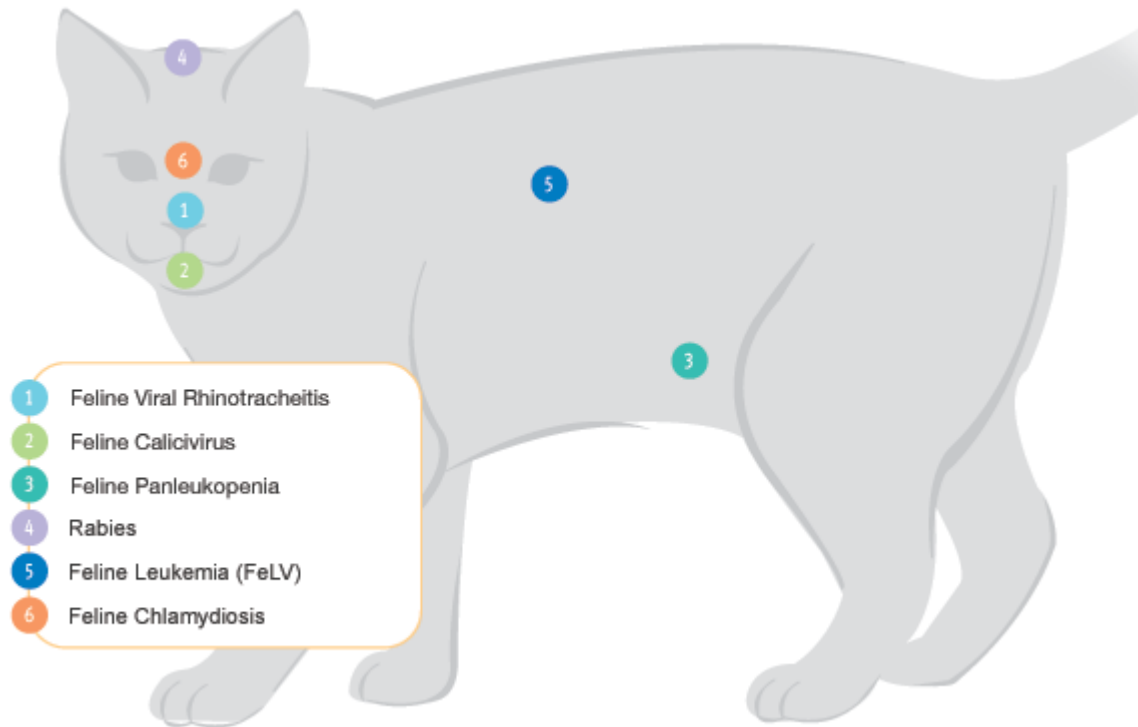


Diseases & Vaccination



Your cat counts on you for protection

One of the very best things you can do to give your cat a long and healthy life is to ensure that he is vaccinated against common feline diseases. Your cat's mother gave her kitten immunity from disease for the first few weeks of existence by providing disease-fighting antibodies in her milk. After that period it's up to you – with the help and advice of your veterinarian – to provide that protection.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines contain small quantities of altered or "killed" viruses, bacteria or other disease-causing organisms. When administered, they stimulate your cat's immune system to produce disease-fighting cells and proteins – or antibodies – to protect against disease.

When should my cat be vaccinated?

Generally, the immunity that a kitten has at birth begins to diminish after 9 weeks. It is then usually time to begin the initial vaccinations, with the booster following at 3 to 4 weeks later. Thereafter, your cat will require repeat vaccinations for the rest of his or her life. Of course, these are only guidelines – your veterinarian will be able to determine the exact schedule that's right for your pet.

Which vaccinations should my cat receive?

Most veterinarians believe that your pet should be protected against those diseases which are most common, highly contagious and which cause serious illness. Such diseases could include

Feline Panleukopenia, Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Feline Calicivirus, Feline Chlamydiosis, Feline Leukemia and Rabies. Other vaccinations may be recommended, based on your veterinarian's evaluation of the risks posed by such factors as your cat's particular heredity, environment and lifestyle.

1 **Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis**

Just as with the human common cold, the virus that causes this upper respiratory-tract infection is easily transmitted from one cat to another, so vaccination is imperative if your pet will come in contact with other cats. Its symptoms may take the form of moderate fever, loss of appetite, sneezing, eye and nasal discharges and coughing. Kittens are particularly affected, but this disease can be dangerous in any unprotected cat, as effective treatment is limited. Even if a cat recovers, it can remain a carrier for life.

2 **Feline Calicivirus**

This virus is another major cause of upper respiratory-tract infection in cats. Widespread and highly contagious, its symptoms of fever, ulcers and blisters on the tongue and pneumonia (inflammation of the lungs) can range from mild to severe, depending on the strain of virus present. Once again, treatment of this disease can be difficult. Even if recovery does take place, a recovered cat can continue to infect other animals, as well as experience chronic sneezing and runny eyes. Vaccination is therefore tremendously important.

3 **Feline Panleukopenia**

Sometimes known as feline distemper, this disease is caused by a virus so resistant, it can survive up to one year outside a cat's body! Therefore, as most cats will be exposed to it during their lifetimes and infection rates in unprotected cats can run as high as 90% to 100%, vaccination against this potentially fatal disease is absolutely essential. Symptoms can include listlessness, diarrhea, vomiting, severe dehydration and fever. Happily, the vaccine itself is very effective in preventing the disease, as treatment is very difficult and, even if recovery takes place for a period of time, a once-infected cat can spread the disease to other, unvaccinated animals.

4 **Rabies**

This incurable viral disease affects the central nervous system of almost all mammals, including humans. It is spread through contact with the saliva of infected animals (which can include skunks, foxes, raccoons and bats) through bites or any break in the skin. Vaccination will provide your cat with much greater resistance to rabies if he is exposed to the disease, but you must be aware that there is no cure once it occurs. For this reason, many municipalities absolutely require that all cats receive rabies vaccinations on a regular basis. Plus, you will definitely have to prove that your cat is vaccinated if you ever have to travel with him – whether across the province or around the world.

5 **Feline Leukemia (FeLV)**

Infection with the Feline Leukemia Virus can result in a multitude of serious health problems for your cat – everything from cancerous conditions such as leukemia to a wide range of secondary infections caused by the destruction of the immune response system. In

fact, it is the leading cause of death in North American cats. After initial exposure to the virus, a cat may show no symptoms of its presence for months, if not years, yet all the while infect others. Testing is available to determine the FeLV status of your cat. If he or she has not yet been infected, but is likely to come in contact with cats that are, vaccination against this potentially fatal disease is highly recommended.

How effective is vaccination?

Like any drug treatment or surgical procedure, vaccinations cannot be 100% guaranteed. However, used in conjunction with proper nutrition and acceptable sanitary, vaccination is clearly your pet's best defense against disease. Plus, when you consider what treating a serious illness can cost you and your beloved cat in terms of both money and distress, prevention through vaccination is extremely cost-effective.