



# Understanding Cat Vaccines

Vaccines are a vital part of keeping cats healthy and protected throughout their lives. They help prevent serious, contagious, and sometimes fatal diseases. Vaccination is especially important for kittens, whose immune systems are still developing and are more vulnerable to infection.



## What Are Vaccines and What Do They Do?

Vaccines work by safely stimulating a cat's immune system to recognize and defend against specific diseases. They contain inactivated or weakened viruses or bacteria (or parts of them) that **cannot cause disease**, but **teach the immune system how to respond** if exposure occurs later.

When a vaccinated cat encounters a disease, their immune system can respond quickly and effectively, helping to prevent illness or reduce its severity.



## Why Are Vaccines Important?

Many feline diseases spread easily through direct contact, shared food bowls, grooming, sneezing, or environmental exposure. Some can cause lifelong illness or be fatal, particularly in kittens. Vaccines help:

- Protect individual cats from preventable disease
- Reduce disease spread among cats in the community
- Prevent chronic illness and long-term complications
- Reduce emergency veterinary visits and hospitalization

Some vaccines also protect public health and are required by law.



## Where did we get our vaccine protocol?

We follow the AAHA guidelines set forth as the industry gold standard for veterinary care. You can find it here <https://www.aaha.org/for-veterinary-professionals/aaha-guidelines/>



## Core Vaccines

**Core vaccines are recommended for all cats**, regardless of whether they live indoors or outdoors, because the diseases are common, serious, and easily transmitted:

- **FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia)**  
Protects against highly contagious upper respiratory infections and panleukopenia, a severe and potentially fatal disease—especially in kittens
- **Rabies**  
A fatal viral disease affecting the nervous system and **required by law** in many areas to protect both animals and people

Even indoor cats need core vaccines, as viruses can be brought into the home on clothing, shoes, or other pets.



## Lifestyle (Non-Core) Vaccines

Lifestyle vaccines are recommended based on a cat's environment and risk of exposure. The primary lifestyle vaccine we recommend is:

- **Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)**

FeLV is spread through close contact with infected cats and can cause immune suppression, anemia, and cancer. Kittens and young cats are especially vulnerable.

Because we are in a **densely populated area**, cats may be exposed through rescue or shelter environments, boarding, grooming, multi-cat households, or accidental outdoor exposure. In these settings, **contagious diseases can spread quickly**, even among cats that are primarily indoors. For this reason, FeLV vaccination is strongly recommended for at-risk cats.



## Why Kittens Need Multiple Boosters

Kittens receive temporary protection from their mother through **maternal antibodies**. While helpful early in life, these antibodies fade over time and can interfere with vaccines. Because this protection wears off at different times for each kitten, one vaccine alone is not enough.

To ensure reliable immunity, kittens receive vaccines **every 3–4 weeks** during their initial vaccine series. This approach:

- Builds strong and lasting immune protection
- Protects kittens during a highly vulnerable stage of development
- Prevents gaps in immunity that could leave them at risk

Stopping vaccines too early can leave kittens unprotected, even if earlier doses were given.



## Are Multiple Rounds of Vaccines Safe?

Yes. **Receiving multiple rounds of vaccines is safe and expected**, especially for kittens. Each dose builds on the previous one, strengthening the immune response rather than overwhelming it.

Veterinary vaccines are carefully tested for safety and are given at intervals specifically designed to support a developing immune system. Most cats experience no side effects, or only mild and temporary reactions such as mild soreness or sleepiness.

The risk of serious illness from vaccine-preventable diseases is far greater than the risk of side effects from vaccination.



## Lifelong Protection

Vaccination does not end after kittenhood. Adult cats require booster vaccines at recommended intervals to maintain immunity, as protection can decrease over time. Your veterinarian will tailor the schedule based on your cat's age, lifestyle, and health.

## In Summary

Vaccines are a safe and effective way to protect cats from serious and contagious diseases. Core vaccines protect all cats, while lifestyle vaccines help reduce risk based on environment and exposure—especially in densely populated areas. Kittens need a series of vaccines every 3–4 weeks, and receiving multiple doses is both safe and necessary to build strong immunity. Following the recommended vaccination schedule helps your cat live a longer, healthier life.

If you have questions about vaccines or your cat's individual needs, your veterinary team is always happy to help.