



Understanding Dog Vaccines

Vaccines are an essential part of keeping dogs healthy throughout their lives. They help protect dogs from serious, contagious, and sometimes life-threatening diseases. Vaccination is especially important during puppyhood, when a dog's immune system is still developing.



What Are Vaccines and What Do They Do?

Vaccines work by safely stimulating a dog's immune system to recognize and fight specific diseases. They contain inactivated or weakened forms of viruses or bacteria (or parts of them) that **cannot cause disease**, but **do train the immune system** to respond effectively.

When a vaccinated dog later encounters a disease, their immune system can respond faster and more efficiently, either preventing illness entirely or significantly reducing how severe it becomes.



Why Are Vaccines Important?

Many vaccine-preventable diseases—such as distemper and parvovirus—are highly contagious and can be severe or fatal, particularly in puppies. Vaccines help:

- Protect individual dogs from serious illness
- Reduce the spread of infectious disease
- Decrease the need for emergency and intensive veterinary care
- Keep communities, parks, grooming facilities, and boarding environments safer

Some diseases can also impact human health, making vaccination an important public health consideration as well.



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 dogs, regardless of lifestyle, because the diseases they protect against are widespread and potentially deadly:

- **Distemper** – A serious viral disease affecting the respiratory, gastrointestinal, and nervous systems
- **Parvovirus** – A highly contagious virus that causes severe gastrointestinal illness, especially dangerous for puppies
- **Leptospirosis** – A bacterial disease spread through wildlife urine and standing water; **this disease is contagious to humans**
- **Rabies** – A fatal viral disease that affects the nervous system and is legally required by law



Lifestyle (Non-Core) Vaccines

Lifestyle vaccines are recommended based on a dog's environment, exposure risk, and daily activities. We strongly recommend the following lifestyle vaccines:

- **Bordetella (Kennel Cough)**
- **Lyme Disease**
- **Canine Influenza (Flu)**

Because we live in a **densely populated area**, dogs are frequently exposed to other pets at parks, grooming salons, daycare, boarding, sidewalks, and shared outdoor spaces. In these environments, **contagious diseases spread quickly and can circulate year-round**, with seasonal spikes. Boarding, grooming and daycare facilities often require these vaccines. For this reason, these vaccines are strongly recommended to help protect your dog and the local dog community.



Why Puppies Need Multiple Boosters

Puppies receive temporary protection from their mother's milk in the form of **maternal antibodies**. While helpful early on, these antibodies can interfere with vaccines and fade at different times for each puppy.

To ensure reliable protection, puppies receive vaccines **every 3–4 weeks** until their immune system is mature enough to respond fully. This booster series:

- Builds a strong and lasting immune response
- Protects puppies during a vulnerable developmental period
- Prevents dangerous gaps in immunity

Stopping vaccines too early can leave puppies 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.



Lifelong Protection

Vaccination is not just for puppies. Adult dogs require booster vaccines at recommended intervals to maintain immunity, as protection can decrease over time. Staying up to date helps ensure long-term health and safety.

In Summary

Vaccines are a safe, effective way to protect dogs from serious and contagious diseases. Core vaccines protect against life-threatening illnesses, while lifestyle vaccines are especially important in densely populated areas where disease exposure is high. Puppies need a series of boosters every 3–4 weeks to develop strong immunity. Following the recommended vaccination schedule helps keep your dog healthy, protected, and able to enjoy a long, active life.

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

