



# Why remembering to vaccinate cats is so important



Shaping the future of animal health

**Virbac**

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### Does my cat need to be vaccinated?

Vaccination is very important for cats - it protects them from all sorts of nasty diseases that could make them very ill and perhaps even kill them.

If your cat has not been vaccinated yet, don't worry - just make sure you talk to the vet about it soon.

### What is vaccination?

Vaccination is when your vet gives your cat a particular medicine known as a "vaccine". This is usually by an injection with a needle into the skin around the cat's neck.

### Won't this hurt?

Some cats don't feel anything, but some may feel a small pinch. But it won't be for long and after a good sleep, your cat will have forgotten all about it.

### Will a vaccine protect my cat forever?

No, not forever - your cat will need regular booster vaccines once a year to make sure it stays protected from the diseases. But it's a good idea for your cat to see the vet once a year anyway, just to have a general health check.

## Will my cat be happier after the vaccination?

No, the vaccination won't make your cat any happier, in fact you probably won't notice any difference in its behaviour at all! But you will know that, having had the vaccination, your cat is protected against catching some really nasty illnesses.



## The need to vaccinate your cat

Whilst your cat is at home, you can control what it comes into contact with.

But a domesticated cat loves nothing more than to wander - when it will inevitably meet other cats, both domestic and feral.

This is the single most important reason why you should have your cat vaccinated, because you have no way of knowing what contagious, potentially lethal, diseases your cat is being exposed to while it's beyond your control.

The alternative is to keep your cat away from other cats on a permanent basis - which is neither practical nor desirable.

## What is your cat at risk from?

Just as with humans, there are many possible illnesses and diseases that your cat is at risk from, but the most common, potentially fatal diseases (against which vaccines provide protection) are listed opposite.



## DISEASE SYMPTOMS

## RISK

**FELINE LEUKAEMIA**

Attacks the immune system, resulting in a wide variety of symptoms and rapid decline. Gum disease, fever, weight loss and anaemia are all common.

Contagious and potentially fatal - the most common cause of cat death by infection.  
Note: an already infected cat will not respond to vaccination.

**CAT FLU (a combination of feline rhinotracheitis and feline calicivirus)**

Very unpleasant - sneezing mucus, coughing, runny eyes and exposed third eyelids, ulcerated mouth and nose, loss of appetite.

Extremely common, highly contagious and can prove fatal both to older cats and kittens.

**FELINE ENTERITIS (Feline Panleucopaenia Virus)**

Attacks the white blood cells, reducing immunity to other illnesses.  
The most common symptom is severe gastroenteritis. Cat becomes depressed and dehydrated from vomiting and diarrhoea.

Relatively uncommon in the UK, but highly contagious (although direct contact with other cats is not necessary) and potentially fatal.

### Putting your cat into a cattery

If you need to put your cat into a cattery, perhaps to go on holiday or in an emergency situation, you will find that reputable catteries will not accept the cat without certification proving that it has been properly vaccinated.

Perhaps more concerning is that many catteries still do not insist on cats being vaccinated against feline leukaemia - which remains one of the most common cause of cat death by infection.

As feline leukaemia is transmitted through the saliva (for example, by biting or by communal grooming) any situation where your cat is likely to come into contact with strange cats, either hostile or friendly, makes this particular vaccination essential.

### Keeping a record of vaccination

Whenever you take your cat to the vet for its booster vaccination it is important that you remember to take along your vaccination record as well.

Your vet will want to see it to ensure that the correct vaccinations are being given at the appropriate time, and you will need to have the document updated if you intend to put your cat into a cattery.

### Regular health checks

Taking your cat along for annual booster vaccinations will give your vet the opportunity to carry out regular general health checks - which will become ever more important as your cat gets older and more susceptible to, for example, dental problems, skin tumours, kidney problems or diabetes.

## Common questions answered

### Q. Will it matter if my cat misses a year?

**A.** Yes it will. Vaccine doses are designed to provide the optimum protection for your pet given that it will receive a regular annual booster. While there is an allowance for a certain amount of “overlap protection” its effectiveness reduces rapidly with the passage of time, leaving your cat at increasing risk of infection.

Your vet will send you a reminder when your cat is due for its booster. We recommend that you make the appointment for treatment as soon as possible when you receive one of these - as, given today's busy lifestyles, it is far too easy to forget!

### Q. Does my cat need protection against rabies?

**A.** Thankfully, the UK is clear of rabies, so if your cat is resident within the UK vaccination will not be necessary unless you are intending to take it abroad (ask for our leaflet on travelling abroad with your pet).

### Q. If my cat catches a disease, will giving it a vaccination cure it?

**A.** No. Vaccination is a preventative measure, not a cure and your cat must be healthy at the time the vaccination is administered.

If your cat has had cat flu or feline enteritis a vaccine will help to prevent the cat contracting these diseases again. However, once a cat has been diagnosed with feline leukaemia that particular vaccine will be completely ineffective.





## Vaccines aren't so scary!

There is a combined vaccination for protection from cat flu and feline enteritis. Your cat will need two doses to begin with, followed by an annual booster thereafter. There is also a vaccine essential to protect your cat against one of the most common fatal infectious disease in cats – feline leukaemia.



actual size



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