

Basic Kitten Care

First and Foremost: Vaccinations

Many common diseases, including Distemper, are deadly to your cat. During the initial day of nursing, kittens receive antibodies against certain diseases from their mother's milk. These protecting antibodies are gradually lost between 6 and 16 weeks of age. A series of vaccinations are given during this period to stimulate your kitten's immune system to produce its own antibodies. Even if your cat never goes outside, many viruses are quite hardy, and can be carried to your cat on your hands, shoes or clothing. Make sure your pet is protected!

We recommend a vaccination schedule for these diseases as follows:

6-8 weeks

- Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis , Calicivirus, Chlamydia, Panleukopenia (FVRCCP)

9-12 weeks

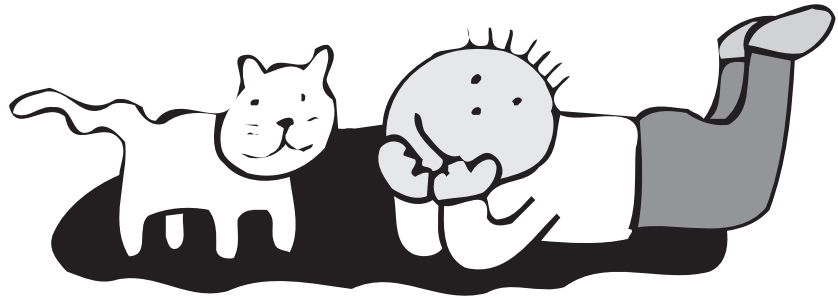
- FVRCCP

12-16 weeks

- FVRCCP
- Feline Leukemia

4-6 months

- Rabies
- Feline Leukemia



Feline leukemia is a deadly disease that is spread directly from cat to cat, and from mother cats to their kittens before or shortly after birth. As many as 40% of cat deaths annually are due to feline leukemia and related viruses.

A blood test once your kitten reaches 12 weeks of age will determine if your cat or kitten already harbors the disease. We will also test for FIV virus, a related illness. If the test is negative, two initial vaccinations, 3-4 weeks apart, and then yearly boosters, will prevent Feline Leukemia in your cat.

Optional vaccines are available to protect your kitten or cat from Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) and FIV. These viruses are becoming more common and are invariably fatal. They are frequently found in outdoor cats and ones that live in multi-cat households, although we do see cases even in single indoor cats. We recommend FIP and sometimes FIV vaccines for cats who go outdoors, and in multiple cat households and households which may be introducing another cat within the next year. The FIV vaccine is new and not as effective as the other vaccines. It requires 3 doses in an initial series, then annual boosters. We recommend this vaccine on a case by case basis, depending on the risk of exposure.





Newer pain medications such as Rimadyl and Etogesic have fewer risks and side effects than older medications like aspirin. Some pets tolerate aspirin well but many will develop serious side effects such as vomiting, diarrhea or kidney disease. Newer medications can cause these side effects too, but usually in a fraction of the number of pets as the older medications.

The medications used for arthritis and other diseases are lifelong, especially the anti-inflammatory ones like aspirin and Rimadyl®. Since these drugs can cause side effects, and since your pet will be on them for a long time, it is important for your dog to have regular examinations and blood tests to monitor for side effects, especially with liver and kidney function. Usually annual blood screening is recommended. For Rimadyl we also need to check the liver with a blood test 10 - 20 days after starting this medication.

Arthritic pets need regular, gentle exercise. For dogs, short walks are best. Over-exertion, as with fetching, frisbee tossing or running, tends to aggravate arthritis, but slow walking or swimming is very beneficial. Two 15 minute sessions are generally better than one 30 minute one. Do not over-do on cold or hot days, as older pets are less tolerant of temperature extremes. For arthritic cats, encourage gentle play.

Heart or respiratory disease and obesity decrease exercise tolerance. If your pet wants to stop, don't force him to keep going. If your pet is a hunting dog, you may have to force him to stop if he tries so hard he endangers his health. Some older pets are like older people - they don't want to admit they can't do the things they did in their youth. Simple household changes such as building a ramp, using a more shallow litter pan or moving the litter box so your cat doesn't have to go up stairs can help your pet to function better.

To control obesity, ask us for specific feeding recommendations. Older, inactive pets may only need half the calories they did when they were younger. Feeding appropriately and reducing weight increases activity. More exercise combined with less weight to carry around can reduce arthritis symptoms dramatically.

Arthritic dogs are most stiff when they lay around, especially on cold surfaces. Encourage your pet to sleep on a bed or blanket and not on the cold, hard floor or ground. Pet sized water beds are available through pet supply catalogs and larger pet stores. These can be extremely beneficial to stiff, sore pets.

Arthritis gradually worsens with time. Other diseases may progress at varying speeds and more than one may be present at a time. Your pet's activity level and medications will need to be adjusted as the months pass. Keep in close contact with us so we can keep your pet as healthy and pain free as possible.

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