

## Cat Vaccines

### Overview

- Vaccination is an important way of protecting your cat against some serious (and sometimes deadly) diseases.
- If you live in the UK, your cat should be regularly vaccinated against:
  - Cat Flu
  - Feline panleukopenia
  - Feline leukaemia virus (if they go outside)
- Rabies vaccination is only necessary if your cat travels in and out of the UK.
- For full protection, your cat will need a primary course of two-three vaccinations (usually at 9 weeks old), followed by yearly boosters to keep them up to date.
- Contact your vet to discuss what vaccinations your cat needs.

### What vaccinations do cats need?



All cats living in the UK (even indoor cats) should be vaccinated against:

- [Cat Flu \(herpes virus and calicivirus\)](#)
- [Feline panleukopenia](#)

If your cat goes outside, they should also be vaccinated for:

- [Feline Leukaemia Virus \(FeLV\)](#)

Some cats require additional vaccinations such as:

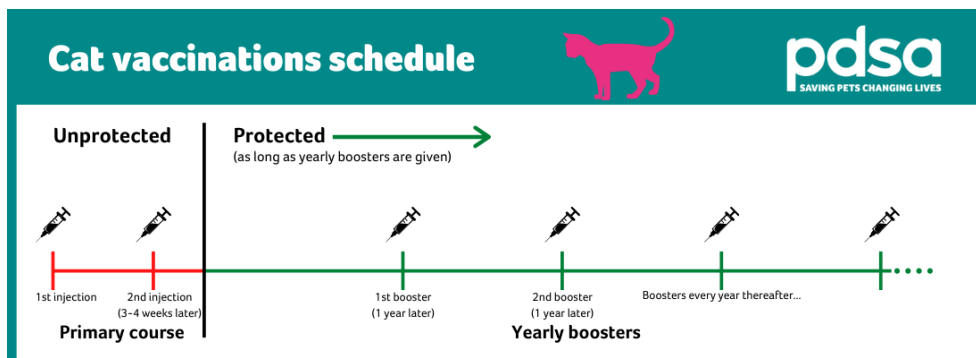
- [Rabies](#) - only necessary for cats that travel outside of the UK.
- **Chlamydophila felis** - a bacteria that causes conjunctivitis and cat flu like symptoms. Vaccination is only usually needed when there is a problem with the disease.

## How do cat vaccines work?

When your cat is vaccinated, a small amount of the disease (which is changed so it can't cause illness) is injected into your cat. This allows your cat's immune system to learn how to defend itself against the disease, so if he/she is exposed to the real disease, they can fight it instead of becoming very ill.

## Vaccination Schedule

To be fully protected, your cat will need a primary course of vaccinations, followed by yearly boosters throughout their life.



**What is a primary course?** A primary course of vaccines involves two (sometimes three) injections, 2-4 weeks apart. Most cats start their primary course of vaccinations as a kitten at around 9 weeks old, but any adult cat that hasn't ever been vaccinated, or hasn't been kept up to date with their yearly boosters, will also need a primary course. Your kitten/cat will usually have full protection seven to ten days after the final injection of their primary course, until then, you will need to keep them protected.

**Annual vaccination boosters.** After your cat has had their primary course, they will need a booster vaccination one year later, and every year thereafter to keep them protected. Some diseases need to be vaccinated for every year (FeLV for example), but some others are only needed every few years. Your vet will tell you which vaccines your cat needs each year.

**If your cat misses a booster, it's likely that their protection will run out and they will need another primary course.**

### Indoor cat vaccinations

If your cat lives exclusively indoors, they will still need to be vaccinated against [cat flu](#) and [panleukopenia](#), but may not need the FeLV vaccine. This is because cat flu and panleukopenia are both very infectious and can be spread many ways (such as on our clothes and shoes), but FeLV only usually spreads between cats that come into close and regular contact with each other. If you have an indoor cat, discuss their vaccinations with your vet to find the best schedule for them.

### What to expect at a vaccine appointment

It's important that your cat is healthy when they have their vaccination, so they will be given a full health check, and you can discuss anything you are worried about.

If you have any questions or concerns about your cat, the vaccination appointment is a good opportunity to discuss them with your vet, for example if you think they might be gaining weight, need a worming tablet, or you're having trouble with dental care.

Your cat's vaccine will be an injection under the skin. You'll be asked to hold him/her still while the injection is given, but if you don't feel comfortable doing so tell your vet so that they can take steps to help keep everyone stay safe. Vaccinations aren't usually painful, but they can feel cold or sometimes sting a little, and every cat reacts slightly differently.

## Protecting an unvaccinated cat

If your kitten/cat is unvaccinated, their vaccines have lapsed, or they haven't quite finished their primary vaccination course, they won't be protected. Keep them safe by following the guidance below:

- Keep your kitten/ cat in the house until they have completed their primary vaccination course (and have been neutered and microchipped).
- Don't allow your cat to meet any cats outside of your household, and don't bring any new cats into your home.

## Vaccine Side Effects

Any drug, including vaccinations, can cause side effects, but fortunately, they are rare, and most cats don't experience any at all. In the unlikely event that your cat does experience any side effects, they are likely to be mild and pass within 24-48 hours. Serious side effects and allergic reactions are extremely rare.

Always speak to your vet if your cat has previously had side effects after a vaccine, or you are worried about vaccinating them. It's important to remember that the risks of side effects are very small compared to the risk of staying unprotected against potentially deadly diseases.

[Read more about vaccination side effects](#)

## Cost of cat vaccination

It's impossible to say exactly how much a vaccination will cost at your vets because prices vary between each individual practice, and from year to year. If you phone your vets, they will be able to tell you their prices.

**Am I eligible for PDSA veterinary treatment?**

## FAQ's

**What's an FVRCP cat vaccine?** This is the name of a particular vaccine, the letters 'FVRCP' stand for the diseases it protects against:

- 'FVR' or 'R' = [Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis \(herpes virus\)](#)
- C = [Calicivirus](#)
- P = [Panleukopenia](#)

There are many different names, brands and types of vaccinations for cats. Talk to your vet for more information if you're unsure what diseases your cat has been vaccinated against.

**Can a vaccinated cat get [cat flu](#)?** Although vaccinations provide excellent protection, none can guarantee 100% cover. So yes, theoretically, vaccinated cats can still catch the diseases that they have been vaccinated against, but it is significantly less likely. In addition to this, if a vaccinated cat catches a disease they have been vaccinated against, they are likely to develop less symptoms and have a much better chance of recovery.

**My cat has already had flu, is there any point vaccinating?** Yes, a cat flu vaccine can reduce the severity and frequency of cat flu 'flare ups' in the future.

**Can my cat be vaccinated if he/she is poorly?** It's always safest to give a vaccination when your cat is as fit and healthy as possible. Contact your vet for advice if your cat is showing any signs of illness before their vaccination appointment.

**What vaccines are required by law?** There's no legal requirement to give your cat vaccines in the UK, but core vaccines are recommended for every cat to keep them safe and healthy. The exception to this is the rabies vaccine, which is a legal requirement if your cat is travelling in and out of the UK.

**How long do cat vaccines last?** The length of vaccination protection depends on the disease, the type of vaccine used and your cat's immune system. As a general rule, FeLV vaccination

protection lasts for about a year, and herpes, calici and panleukopenia last for around three years. However, this can last a little longer (often 2-3 months more) if you've kept your cat's vaccines up to date throughout their lives. If you're unsure whether your cat is still protected by their vaccines, speak to your vet to discuss their specific situation.

**Can my cat have vaccinations if they're on medications?** Most medications won't affect your cat's vaccinations. However, some drugs such as [steroids](#) and certain anti-itch drugs, can affect vaccines, so it's always best to discuss any medications your cat is on, before they are given their vaccine.

**Are vaccines dangerous?** All vaccines used by vets in the UK are licensed, meaning they have to go through rigorous safety checks before they are approved for use. These licenses are also constantly under review by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate to make sure they stay safe for your cat. As with any medication, there is always the possibility of side effects, but they are rare, and the benefits of protection from a vaccine far outweigh the risks.

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