

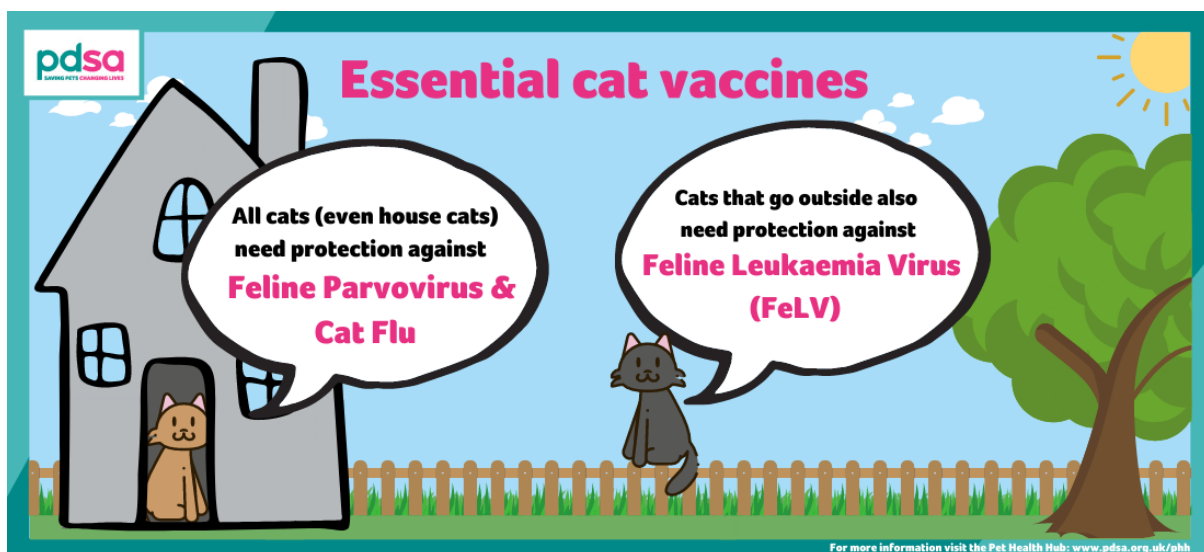


# Cat and Kitten Vaccinations

## Overview

- Vaccinating your cat protects them from a range of serious diseases.
- If you live in the UK, you need to make sure your cat is vaccinated against:
  - Cat flu
  - Feline parvovirus
  - Feline Leukaemia virus (if they go outside)
- To be fully protected, your cat will need a primary course of injections, and regular boosters throughout their life.

## What vaccines does my cat need?



### Core vaccinations:

All cats in the UK, even indoor cats, need to be vaccinated against:

- [Cat flu](#) (protects against Feline Herpes Virus and Calicivirus)
- [Feline parvovirus](#) (also known as 'Panleukopenia'/'Infectious Enteritis')

If your cat goes outside, even just your garden, they also need a vaccine for:

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

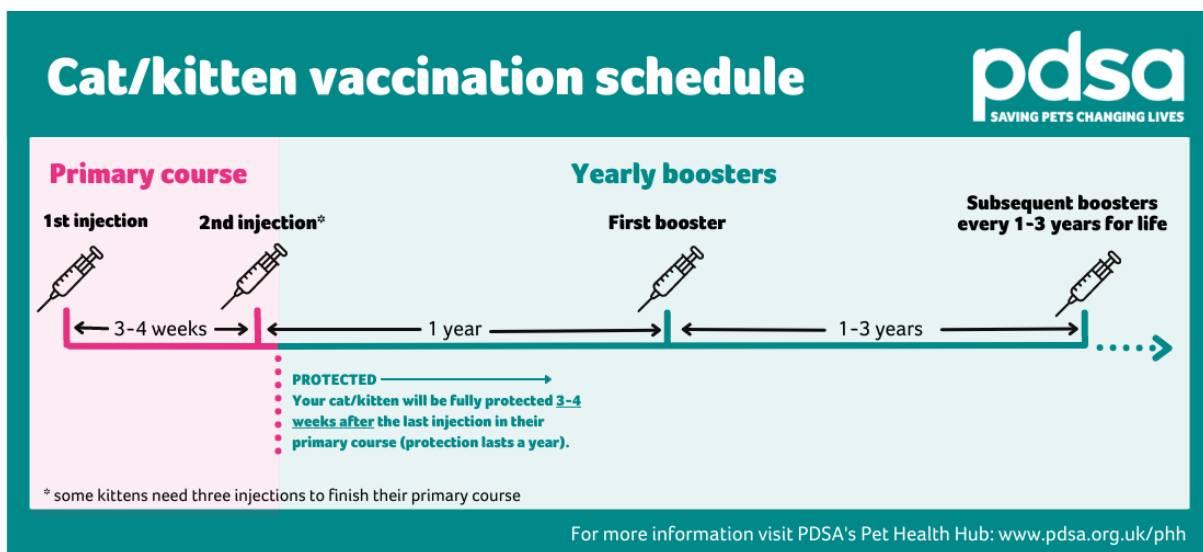
### Additional vaccinations:



- **Rabies** – necessary for cats that travel outside of the UK
- **Chlamydomphila felis** – a bacteria that causes eye infections and cat flu like symptoms. Vaccination is only usually recommended if your cats have a pre-existing problem with it.

Vaccinations are especially important (usually compulsory), for cats staying at a cattery.

## Vaccination schedule



### Kitten vaccines or primary course

- If your cat/kitten has never had a vaccine before, they will need \*two injections 3-4 weeks apart – this is usually at 9 and 12 weeks old.
- They will be fully protected 3-4 weeks after their final injection.
- Protection lasts 1 year, after which they'll need a booster.

\*Some kittens (but not all) need a third injection at 15 weeks.

### Adult boosters

- Your cat will need their first booster one year after their primary course.
- They then need boosters every 1-3 years (depending on what they're being vaccinated against).
- If you cat misses a booster, they may need to restart their primary course again, depending on how overdue they are.



## Protecting unvaccinated cats and kittens

### Kittens and unvaccinated cats

If your cat/kitten is unvaccinated, or has only had their first injection, keep them safe by following the guidance below:

- Keep them inside
- Do not allow them to meet any cats outside your home
- Wash your hands after going outside, especially if you have touched any other cats

### Previously vaccinated but overdue

If your cat has previously been vaccinated, but is overdue their booster, they might have a bit of protection for two to three months after it was due, but after that they will be at risk again. Follow the guidance below until they are fully protected:

- If they are a house cat, continue keeping them indoors and prevent other cats coming into the house.
- Wash your hands after going outside, especially if you have touched any other cats.
- If they go outdoors, but are happy to stay inside, keep them in as much as possible.
  - During this time [monitor them for stress](#) and allow them outside again if they appear unsettled.
  - Stress can be very bad for cat health and cause problems such as [Feline Idiopathic Cystitis \(stress cystitis/FIC\)](#) and [blocked bladders](#).
  - Don't keep your cat indoors if they have previously suffered with stress related illness.

## Cost of cat vaccinations

It's not possible to say exactly how much your cat's vaccination will cost because prices vary between each individual practice and each type of vaccine. If you call your vet practice, they will be able to tell you their current prices.

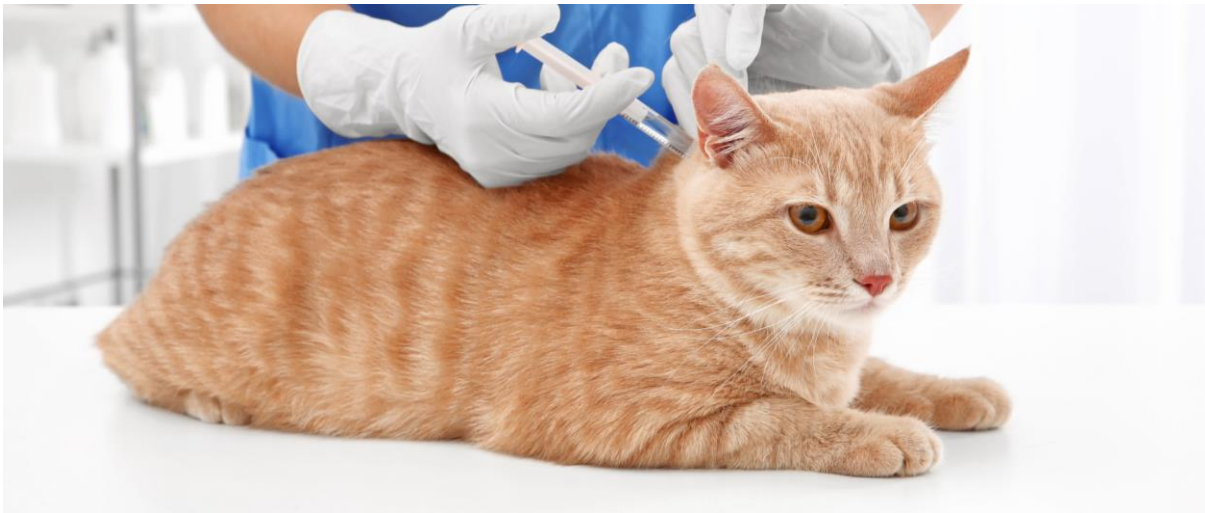


## Potential side effects

**Vaccination side effects** are rare and most cats don't experience any at all. If your cat does have any, they are likely to be mild (high temperature, low energy, and a reduced appetite), and pass within 24-48 hours. Serious side effects are extremely rare, but if your cat does experience any, speak to your vet as soon as possible. **It's important to remember that the risks of being unvaccinated are much higher than the risk of vaccination side effects.**

If your cat has previously had a reaction, mention it to your vet before their next vaccination. Your vet may decide to give them a different vaccine, or some medication to help prevent the same thing happening again.

## What to expect at a vaccine appointment



- Your vet will give your cat a full health check to make sure they are fit to have their vaccination – if they are concerned about anything, they may delay it until they are better.
- The vaccine will be an injection under the skin. You might be asked to hold your cat while it's given – let your vet know if you don't feel comfortable doing this.
- The vaccine is unlikely to be painful, but it might feel cold or sting a bit – every cat reacts slightly differently.
- If you have any questions or concerns about your cat, the vaccination appointment is a good opportunity to discuss them – for example, if you



think they might be gaining weight, need a worming tablet, or you're having trouble with dental care.

## FAQ's

**How do vaccines work?** When your cat is vaccinated, a small amount of the disease (that's been changed so it can't cause illness), is injected into your cat. This teaches your cat's immune system to defend itself against that particular disease, so if they are exposed to it for real, they are much less likely to become poorly.

**Why do indoor cats need 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 FeLV only usually spreads between cats in close and regular contact, but cat flu and panleukopenia are very infectious and can spread on clothes, shoes, and other surfaces. If you have an indoor cat, discuss their vaccinations with your vet to find the best schedule for them.

**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 = [Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis/Herpes virus \(cat flu\)](#)
- C = [Calicivirus \(cat flu\)](#)
- P = [Feline Parvovirus Panleukopenia/Infectious Enteritis](#)

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

**Can a vaccinated cat still catch cat flu?** Although vaccinations provide excellent protection, none can guarantee 100% cover. So yes, theoretically, a vaccinated cat could still catch [cat flu](#), 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 quicker 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 they are 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.

Published: April 2022