# Cat Vaccines: Core and Noncore Vaccines

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Vaccines, an essential part of a complete health program for cats, are divided into two categories: core and noncore. Experts generally agree on which vaccines are core (vaccines every cat should receive) and noncore (vaccines only certain cats should receive).

In cats, suggested core vaccines include: feline panleukopenia (distemper), feline viral rhinotracheitis, feline calicivirus, and rabies.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) recommends vaccinating against feline panleukopenia (distemper), feline viral rhinotracheitis, and feline calicivirus every three years. But they also suggest that cats at a high risk of exposure to these diseases may benefit from more frequent vaccinations. Some vaccines are licensed for use every 3 years. A number of vaccines are not however, and the manufacturer's directions advise vaccinating yearly. Since the AAFP recommendations and these manufacturer's directions do not agree, when to vaccinate, and with what, must be a personal (and informed) choice for each cat owner. How often to vaccinate will depend upon the vaccine used, the age and health status of the cat, and the potential that the cat will be exposed to the disease. Consult your veterinarian to determine what is best for your cat.

Every cat should receive the rabies vaccine. To be legal, the rabies vaccine must be given by a veterinarian (or in some cases a veterinary technician under the direction of a veterinarian). Time and frequency of vaccination are governed by local laws. In most cases, kittens should be vaccinated against rabies at 12-16 weeks of age, and then one year later. Boosters are given as required.

Noncore vaccines include feline leukemia (FeLV), feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), Bordetella, Giardia and Chlamydophila. Whether to vaccinate with noncore vaccines depends upon several factors: the age, breed, and health status of the cat; the potential exposure of the cat to an animal that has the disease; the type of vaccine; and how common the disease is in the geographical area where the cat lives or may visit.

The AAFP recommends against FeLV vaccinations for adult totally indoor cats who have no exposure to other cats. However, it is suggested that all kittens, because they are most susceptible and their lifestyles may change, should receive an initial FeLV vaccination series. FIP and Giardia vaccinations are not recommended. The choice to use a Chlamydophila vaccine is based upon the prevalence of the disease and husbandry conditions.

Be sure to talk with your veterinarian to determine which vaccines your cat requires to stay healthy and happy.



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