

Vaccines & Boosters



The **WHYS** and **HOWS** of Building Immunity in Your Pets

What is a vaccine?

A vaccine is a preparation that helps the body's immune system get ready to fight disease-causing organisms.

How does a vaccine create immunity?

When the immune system "sees" an unfamiliar microbe (bacteria or virus) as part of a vaccine, it "learns" how to produce antibodies to combat those microbes. Antibodies help the body fight infection and protect it from getting the same illness again. If the immune system "sees" or is exposed to the same microbe in the future (e.g., by natural infection), produce antibodies faster. Vaccinations are intended to reduce the severity of the illness and/or prevent the disease entirely by creating immunity.

Why do puppies and kittens need vaccines?

Puppies and kittens are born with antibodies and receive some antibodies from their mother while nursing. However, these maternal antibodies slowly decline over time. A vaccine ensures that puppies and kittens develop their own antibodies to replace the ones from their mother.

Why are boosters important?

In most properly vaccinated pets, the immunity provided by a vaccine should last more than a year. However, immunity declines with time. To "boost" a pet's antibody levels, revaccinations have proven very successful.

Think of the immune system like a charging station with each vaccine being a different device that needs to be charged according to its own schedule. For some vaccines, the charge might hold for 2-3 years before boosters are needed. For others, yearly recharging is recommended.

Your veterinarian will discuss the need and frequency of vaccinations and boosters for your pet based on your pet's needs and lifestyle.

