

## Puppy Shots

Why do puppies require vaccination? Very young puppies do not have fully developed immune systems and are highly susceptible to infectious diseases. This is especially true as the natural immunity provided in their mothers' milk gradually wears off. To keep gaps in protection as narrow as possible and to provide optimal protection against disease for the first few months of life, a series of vaccinations are scheduled, usually 3-4 weeks apart. For most puppies and kittens, the final vaccination in the series is administered at when they about 4 months of age. Which vaccines should your pet receive? Discuss with your veterinarian your pet's lifestyle, access to other animals, and travel to other geographic locations, since these factors affect your pet's risk of exposure to disease. Not all pets should be vaccinated with all vaccines just because these vaccines are available. "Core" vaccines are recommended for most pets in a particular area. "Non-Core" vaccines are reserved for pets with unique needs. Your veterinarian will consider your pet's particulars, the diseases at hand, and the application of available vaccines to customize a vaccine recommendation for your pet. How often should your pet be vaccinated? Your veterinarian will tailor a vaccination schedule to suit your pet's needs. For many years, a set of annual vaccinations was considered normal and necessary for dogs and cats. Veterinarians have since learned more about diseases and pets' immune systems, and there is increasing evidence that immunity triggered by some vaccines provides protection beyond one year. The immunity triggered by other vaccines may fail to protect for a full year. More than one successful vaccination schedule is possible. Talk with your veterinarian about what is best for your pet. What is distemper? Distemper shots protect against a group of diseases. They include infectious canine distemper (ICD) a very contagious virus that attacks the lungs and affects the brain and spinal. Canine adenovirus type 2 (CAV-2) causes a serious case of "kennel cough". Canine parvovirus (CPV) attacks the intestinal tract, and often attacks very young puppies, causing heart damage. Parvo, as it is often called, is the most common fatal disease and is also very difficult to protect against. What is rabies? Rabies is transferred by animal bite or via saliva of an infected animal. Rabies is a fatal disease. This disease can be transferred to humans, making it of particular concern. Unvaccinated dogs which come into close contact with skunk, squirrels, rabbits, rats, etc are at risk. What is leptospirosis? Leptospirosis causes kidney and liver damage. This disease can affect any mammal and is contracted from a host of other mammals. It is spread by urine from infected animals and can be contracted by humans. What is lyme disease? Lyme disease is spread by ticks. Lyme Disease poses risks to humans and is difficult to diagnose. It is treated with antibiotics. Dogs that are in areas dense with brush can get ticks. The location, climate, and season also factor in. What is bordetella? Bordetella often causes "kennel cough", severe but rarely fatal. It spreads through the air in confined areas. If your dog visits kennels, doggy day car, etc often, it is wise to get a vaccination for your pet. Most boarding kennels require it.