

## Vaccinating Your Dog

Vaccinations can protect your dog against serious infectious illnesses, but they aren't one size fits all. Your veterinarian will help you select the vaccines your dog needs based on age, health status, lifestyle and other risk factors. Even though he may not need vaccines that often, your dog should have a veterinary checkup every six to twelve months.

### Core Vaccines

Core vaccines are those recommended for nearly every dog. Core vaccines for dogs are Canine Distemper, Canine Adenovirus-2, Parvovirus, and Rabies. The first three are usually combined in a single injection given to puppies starting at 6-8 weeks of age and boosted every 3-4 weeks until at least sixteen weeks of age. Thereafter, the combination vaccine is repeated every 1-3 years. Rabies vaccination is given first at 12 to 16 weeks of age and boosted one year later. After that, the Rabies vaccine is repeated every one to three years depending on the laws in your area.

**Canine Distemper** is a serious, highly contagious disease. It weakens the immune system, leaving infected dogs vulnerable to other infections. Symptoms include fever, coughing, green nasal and eye discharge, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, loss of appetite, thickened toe pads, muscle twitching, seizures, and blindness. Puppies are most susceptible. Distemper is fatal in up to 90% of cases. Fortunately, the vaccination is very effective if given prior to the dog's exposure.

There are two forms of **Canine Adenovirus**, CAV-1 and CAV-2. Vaccination with CAV-2 provides protection against both. CAV-1 is the cause of Infectious Canine Hepatitis, which damages the liver. CAV-2 is one of several organisms that can cause Infectious Canine Tracheobronchitis, or Kennel Cough. Just as you would expect, the main sign is a persistent cough. Its spread mainly in places where large numbers of dogs are in close proximity, such as kennels, shelters, grooming facilities, or dog shows.

**Canine Parvovirus** (CPV) is a highly contagious disease affecting the digestive system. It can also weaken the immune system and damage the heart. Signs include fever, lethargy, vomiting, bloody diarrhea, dehydration and loss of appetite. It can be fatal, especially in puppies born to un-vaccinated mothers. Parvovirus treatment usually requires hospitalization.

**Rabies** is an incurable disease of the nervous system that is nearly always fatal. Worse yet, it is transmitted between most animal species, including humans. Although rabies transmission requires direct body fluid contact, even indoor pets can be at risk since sick wild animals may enter homes. Regular rabies vaccination is mandated by law in most states.

### Non-Core Vaccines

A myriad of other vaccines are available for dogs. Your veterinarian can help you determine the right ones for your dog.

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**Infectious Canine Tracheobronchitis** (Kennel Cough) is a treatable respiratory illness. It can be caused by CAV-2, Canine Para influenza, and Bordetella bronchiseptica. The combination vaccine normally given to dogs includes CAV-2 and Para influenza. Dogs at high risk of exposure to kennel cough can receive a more potent vaccine, given as nose drops or as an injection that protects against Bordetella as well. This is recommended for dogs that are boarded, groomed professionally, or taken to dog shows.

**Leptospirosis** is a serious illness that damages the kidneys and liver and can be transmitted to people. Unfortunately, the vaccine provides only moderate protection and can cause allergic reactions. Therefore, some veterinarians do not recommend vaccinating every dog. Dogs at highest risk of exposure are those that are exposed to water that may be contaminated by urine from wild animals or farm animals.

**Lyme Disease** causes sore joints, fever, and swollen lymph nodes. It is transmitted by ticks and can infect people too. Lyme disease is treatable with antibiotics if caught early. Vaccination for Lyme Disease is recommended for tick-exposed dogs in areas where the disease is common, such as the northeastern U.S.

**Canine Coronavirus** causes gastrointestinal illness similar to parvovirus, but milder. Because infection is mild and relatively uncommon in many areas, the vaccine is not recommended for all dogs.

**Giardia** is a parasitic organism that causes diarrhea and can infect other animals and people as well as dogs. Dogs that drink water contaminated by wild animal feces are at highest risk. The vaccine, however, provides only partial protection. Giardia infection can be treated with antibiotics.

### **Preventive Health Care Beyond Vaccinations**

Preventive health care for your dog means more than just vaccinations. Checkups every six to twelve months can catch many health problems while they are easily treatable. Parasite control, good nutrition, and regular dental care are other keys to keeping your dog healthy for years to come.