

ABOUT FIV AND FELV

Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia virus (FeLV) infections are a major cause of death in cats.

How The Viruses Spread

Both viruses are spread contagiously from cat to cat, and surveys show that up to 15% of sick cats are infected with the viruses. But even healthy cats may harbor infection and spread viruses to other cats. In some cats, signs of disease may not become apparent until weeks, months, or even years after they first become infected with FIV or FeLV. FIV is typically spread when one cat bites another; rarely does an infected mother infect her kittens. FeLV is spread when the saliva or urine of an infected cat comes in contact with another cat. This can happen when cats groom each other, or when they share food and water bowls or litter boxes.

What The Viruses Do

FIV and FeLV affect cats in similar ways, primarily by interfering with the immune system's ability to ward off infections. Bacteria, viruses, protozoa, and fungi found in the everyday environment—where they usually don't affect healthy cats—can cause severe illness in FIV- and FeLV-infected cats. Various kinds of cancer and blood diseases are also much more common in cats infected with either virus.

Signs Of Possible Infection

Early signs of infection are often subtle and commonly seen in cats that are simply not feeling well. These signs include:

- Decreased appetite
- Decreased grooming
- Decreased energy

As infection becomes more advanced, you may see the following signs:

- Marked loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Weakness
- Pale gums
- Mouth sores
- Diarrhea
- Enlarged lymph nod
- Abscesses

Why You Should Have Your Cat Tested

Early detection of infection will help you not only maintain the health of your own cat, but it will allow you to prevent spreading infection to other cats. Fortunately, it is usually quite simple to diagnose infection. A small blood sample is all that's needed. You'll get the result of an "in-house" test in minutes. In some cases, however, it may be necessary to follow up with a blood sample sent to a veterinary laboratory. In this case, the result will usually be available to you within a week.

When To Have Your Cat Tested

FIV and FeLV testing is important in the following situations:

- If your cat has never been tested before
- If your cat is sick, even if it may have tested free of infection in the past
- When cats and kittens are newly adopted, whether or not they will be entering a household with other cats
- If your cat has recently been exposed to an infected cat
- If your cat is exposed to cats that may be infected (for example, if your cat has been bitten by a cat of unknown status or if your cat goes outdoors unsupervised or lives with other cats that might be infected)
- Prior to your cat's receiving an FIV or FeLV vaccine
- If your cat lives in a household with unknown FIV or FeLV infection status; infected cats can remain asymptomatic for years, during which time they may transmit the virus to uninfected cats

Vaccinating against Feline Leukemia and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus helps to prevent your cat from getting the diseases.

We test indoor/outdoor cats every year. Indoor cats have to be tested at least once in their life.

We use a test called a Combo Snap Test. It tests for both FIV and FeLV. It takes about 10 minutes to determine the results. All we need is a small blood sample from your cat.

FYI: Humans are not at risk for these diseases.