



Feline Parvo

"Feline parvo (also called panleukopenia, feline distemper or FPV) is a vaccine-preventable infectious disease. The disease is resistant to many commonly used disinfectants and is unrelated to canine distemper. There is no treatment for this disease with veterinary focus on minimizing the impact of the symptoms."

Parvo in cats is different than the parvo virus that dogs get. It is actually a virus called panleukopenia, but is sometimes called feline parvo because the symptoms are similar to the symptoms of canine parvo virus. It is highly contagious and cats should be vaccinated as kittens and have booster shots every year.

Cats may be contagious 2–3 days before showing any symptoms. The virus is spread through bodily fluids and contact with feces. A cat can spread the disease to other cats 2–6 weeks post-recovery.

Feline Parvo Symptoms

Some older cats do not have severe symptoms, but younger, un-vaccinated cats can become severely ill. Cat parvo symptoms can be fatal.

Symptoms of cat parvo include:

- high fever
- severe vomiting
- diarrhea
- anorexia
- lethargy
- seizures

- sudden death if severe

Diarrhea is usually yellow in color, foul smelling, and often bloody. Dehydration and shock may result. Symptoms usually come on very suddenly.

If your cat has symptoms of feline parvo, she needs to go to the vet right away.

Feline Parvo Diagnosis

Your veterinarian will take a full medical history including the vaccination record. It is possible that kittens that have had a vaccination still get the disease since it might not have taken hold. The reason is that kittens have some antibodies that are transferred from the mother which prevent vaccinations from sometimes working.

Your vet will perform a complete physical examination. He or she will feel her abdomen to see if her lymph nodes are enlarged and if her intestines feel thick. He or she will also be checking to see if her abdomen is painful to the touch.

Your vet will also do some blood tests called a Parvo ELISA SNAP test. Inaccurate results are possible with this test. Panleukopenia means a decrease in white blood cells. Your vet will be checking your cat's white blood cell count and also checking for a low platelet count (the components of blood that help it to clot).

Your veterinarian will also look for inflammation of the small intestine (segmental enteritis) since it is one of the symptoms of Panleukopenia.

There are tests that can detect cat parvo in feces and urine, but these are expensive tests and are usually performed in research settings and not in a vet's office.

Feline Pravo Treatment

There is no cure for feline parvo. That's why it's so important to get your cat vaccinated. If your cat survives the first five days of the illness, chances are she will survive. Full recovery may take several weeks, however.

Treatment involves mainly supportive care. Fluids must be given by IV or subcutaneously (under the skin) to counteract dehydration. Medication will be given to stop the vomiting

(anti-emetics) and diarrhea (anti-motility drugs). Anti-convulsive medication will be given if your cat is having seizures. Antibiotics may be given to prevent a secondary bacterial infection from developing.

The environment of a cat with feline parvo should be considered infected. Food dishes, toys, cages, floors, and other items must be disinfected with bleach and water. Use half a cup of bleach to one gallon of water. Bedding and soft items should be washed in hot water.

Cat Vaccine for Parvo and Distemper

All cats should be vaccinated starting at age 4-6 weeks including injured and mildly ill kittens. Kittens under 16 weeks should receive boosters every two weeks if in a high risk environment such as a shelter. Check with your veterinarian if your cat has already been diagnosed with panleukopenia. There is no risk to the kittens when vaccinating pregnant cats who have preexisting immunity from prior vaccination or exposure. The risk of fetal damage only exists in cats (called a queen or a cat that is ready to mate) that have never been exposed to panleukopenia or vaccinated. **Sources**

Feline Panleukopenia
S. Newbury
Koret Shelter Medicine Program
Center for Companion Animal Health, University of California

Panleukopenia
Nash, Holly DVM

www.sniksnak.com [Animal Wellness Magazine](#)