

Vaccinations-Everything you need to know

How many shots does your puppy need?

Animals, like people, are most susceptible to infectious agents during the first month of life. Newborn animals usually receive protection from antibodies in the mother's milk. To be sure that nursing animals receive this protection, the mother should be immunized before breeding. To maintain and strengthen disease resistance after the antibodies in the mother's milk have been depleted, a series of vaccinations should be administered to young animals from approximately six weeks to six months. Lifetime protection is maintained by annual booster vaccinations. There are many effective vaccination schedules and your puppy is never too old to start a vaccination program. Vaccines are administered under the skin (subcutaneously), in the muscle (intramuscular), or by nasal spray. There is no one answer to "how many shots your puppy needs", but a few basic rules apply. A minimum of two multivalent vaccinations (including distemper and parvo) given three to four weeks apart are required for every dog or puppy over three months old. An additional vaccination against rabies is also necessary. Vaccinations against coronavirus, Bordetella, or Lyme disease are based on owner's needs and veterinarian's advice. For young puppies, vaccinations usually start at six-to-eight weeks of age and are given every three-to-four weeks until the puppy is 16 weeks of age. Recent information regarding parvovirus may extend this recommendation to 18 or even 20 weeks.

Diseases that vaccines protect your puppy from:

Canine distemper is a highly contagious viral disease transmitted by direct or indirect contact with the discharges from an infected dog's eyes and nose. A healthy dog does not need to come in direct contact with an infected dog, because air currents and inanimate objects can carry the virus. Early signs of canine distemper are similar to those of a severe cold and often go unrecognized by the pet owner. Vomiting and diarrhea may accompany the respiratory problems. A nervous system disorder may also develop. The death rate from canine distemper is greater than 50% in adult dogs and much higher in puppies. Even if the dog survives, distemper can cause permanent damage to a dog's nervous system, sense of smell, hearing and sight. Partial or total paralysis is not uncommon.

Parvovirus is a serious problem, due to the highly resistant nature of the virus, Canine Parvovirus can withstand extreme temperature changes, and exposure to most disinfectants. The source of the infection is usually dog feces which can contaminate cages, shoes, and can be carried on the feet and hair of infected animals. This virus attacks the intestinal tract, white blood cells and heart muscle. Clinical signs include vomiting, severe diarrhea, accompanied by a loss of appetite, depression, and high fever. Most deaths occur within 48 to 72 hours after the onset of clinical signs. Puppies less than 3 months of age, can experience an inflammation of the heart (myocarditis). Infected pups may act depressed, collapse gasping for breath, and death may follow immediately. Puppies that survive are likely to have permanently damaged hearts.

Canine Parainfluenza is a virus that produces a mild respiratory tract infection causes canine Parainfluenza. It is often associated with other respiratory tract viruses. In combination these viruses are usually transmitted by contact with the nasal secretions of infected dogs. The vaccine to protect against this disease may be combined with other vaccines to offer broader protection.

Infectious **Canine Hepatitis** is virus that can infect many tissues, but usually attacks the liver, causes infectious canine hepatitis. In some instances, a whiteness or cloudiness of the eye may accompany the disease. Another strain of the same virus can cause respiratory tract infections. These viruses are transmitted by contact with objects that have been contaminated with the urine from infected dogs. Infectious Canine Hepatitis is different from human hepatitis.

Canine Coronavirus is a contagious intestinal disease much like Parvovirus that causes vomiting and diarrhea in dogs of all ages. Coronavirus antigens have recently been added to most multivalent vaccinations to insure this extra protection.

Rabies vaccinations are given first at 4 months of age which is both advisable for the health of the dog, and by law in most states. After that, the dog will receive a booster a year later, then usually every three years after that in most states. Rabies vaccination is required to get your dog licensed, and your veterinarian can assist you with the process. Once your dog receives it's rabies vaccine, the veterinarian will give you all the paperwork you need to receive the tags by mail.

Canine Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that impairs renal (kidney) function and may result in kidney failure. Clinical signs include vomiting, impaired vision, and convulsions. The disease is transmitted by contact with the urine of infected animals or by contact with objects that have been contaminated with the urine of infected animals.

CAUTION: Many puppy immune systems cannot tolerate the vaccination level for leptospirosis as puppies. Most small breed puppy owners will not have their veterinarians vaccinate for leptospirosis before their puppy is one year of age.