

Vaccine Information for Dogs

Why does my dog need vaccines?

Vaccines help protect against disease by training the body's immune system to recognize and fight an infection. Without vaccination, many dogs would become seriously ill or die from preventable diseases. Some diseases can be fully prevented with vaccines. Vaccines also protect people from diseases that could be transmitted by dogs.

Why does my puppy need so many vaccine boosters?

Puppies receive some disease protection through their mother's milk in the form of "maternal antibodies". These slowly go away over the first five months of the puppy's life, but exactly when they stop working varies between individual dogs. The goal of vaccinating a puppy every month is to make sure they get a vaccine as soon as possible after these antibodies from their mother go away to minimize the amount of time that they are susceptible to disease.

How often does my adult dog need vaccine boosters?

This depends on your dog's age, previous vaccine history, health status, and lifestyle. Boosters are generally given a year after the puppy series is completed, and then every 3 years after that. If there is a gap in your dog's vaccination history, your veterinarian may recommend additional boosters.

What are the risks of vaccination?

It is common for pets to experience mild side effects after receiving a vaccine. These symptoms are considered normal since they mean the vaccine is working - your pet's immune system is being activated. These symptoms generally begin within a few hours of the vaccine and last for 1-2 days.

- Sensitivity and swelling at the vaccination site (usually the back leg)
- Mild fever
- Decreased appetite and activity

More serious reactions to vaccines, such as allergic reactions, can occur but are less common. Allergic reactions generally happen within minutes to hours after vaccination. These reactions can be life-threatening and are medical emergencies but are treatable.

Which vaccines does my dog need?

Rabies Vaccine

Rabies is a fatal disease that can be spread from animals to people through bites. Rabies is spread by a bite from an infected animal, usually wild animals such as raccoons, bats, or skunks.

Rabies is an essential vaccine for all dogs. All dogs living in Ontario are required by law to be vaccinated for rabies. Puppies can be vaccinated for rabies as early as 12 weeks of age. The first adult booster is given 1 year after that. If your dog stays current on the rabies vaccination, boosters can be performed every 3 years.



DHPP (Distemper/Hepatitis/Parvovirus/Parainfluenza)

The DHPP vaccine (also called DAPP) is a combination vaccine that protects against four different viruses – distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus, and parainfluenza. Parvovirus is the one of the most important components of this vaccine. Parvovirus is a very contagious and often fatal disease. The virus causes severe vomiting and diarrhea and weakens the immune system. The vaccine for parvovirus is very effective and an adult dog who has been vaccinated is very well protected against this disease. Distemper is another serious virus that this vaccine protects against. Distemper is often fatal in dogs. The vaccine for distemper is very effective and an adult dog who has been vaccinated is very well protected against this disease.

DHPP is an essential vaccine for all dogs. Puppies can be vaccinated as young as 6-8 weeks of age. They then receive boosters every 3-4 weeks until 16 weeks (4 months) of age. The first adult booster is given 1 year after that, and then every 3 years.

Leptospirosis

This vaccine protects against leptospirosis, which is a bacterial infection that dogs can develop after contact with contaminated water or the urine of wildlife. Leptospirosis is a very serious and often fatal disease that causes liver and kidney failure. In the past it was thought that city dogs or small-breed dogs may not need this vaccine, but as cases of leptospirosis are increasing across Ontario, it is now recommended that any dog who spends any time outdoors is vaccinated for this disease.

The leptospirosis vaccine can be given on its own or as a combination vaccine with the DHPP vaccine. The earliest the leptospirosis vaccine can be given is 12 weeks old. After the first dose, a booster is given in 1 month. After that the vaccine is always annual (it cannot be given every 3 years like the other core vaccines). If there is a gap in your dog's vaccination history, your veterinarian may recommend additional boosters.

Kennel Cough (*Bordetella*, Canine Adenovirus-2, Parainfluenza)

The kennel cough vaccine is a combination intranasal vaccine that protects against three causes of kennel cough (two viruses and one bacteria). Kennel cough is a respiratory disease spread between dogs through the air. There are other types of viruses and bacteria that can cause kennel cough that are not prevented by this vaccine, so being vaccinated does not guarantee that your dog will not come down with kennel cough. If your dog does get kennel cough, the infection may be less severe or not last as long. Many boarding kennels, dog daycares, or groomers require that dogs are vaccinated against kennel cough to use their facility.

This vaccine is optional and is recommended for dogs who have a social lifestyle with other dogs or use one a facility that requires this vaccine. This vaccine can be given as young as 8 weeks old and then is given each year after that.

Lyme

The Lyme vaccine is NOT currently offered by Toronto Humane Society Public Veterinary Services. The best way to protect your dog against Lyme disease is to use monthly tick prevention during the warm weather months and regular check your dog for ticks after outdoor activities.

