

What every Feline Family should know:



The importance of testing for Feline Leukemia (FeLV) & FIV

Feline Leukemia (**FeLV**) and Feline Immune Deficiency Virus (**FIV**) are spread from cat to cat. Up to 15 percent of cats showing any symptoms of illness are infected with at least one of these viruses. Neither virus is curable, however both can be treated and managed if caught early.

With early detection, infected cats can live for many years

Infected cats can live for many years if diagnosed early and treated properly. Early detection also enables you to prevent the viruses from spreading to other cats in your home.

Testing requires a small blood sample and takes about 10 minutes for test results. Since the viruses take anywhere from 2 weeks to 6 months to show a positive on the test, a negative result must be confirmed with a second test. Frequency of testing depends on your cat's lifestyle. Have your cat tested at least twice in his/her lifetime if your cat lives strictly indoors and *never goes* outside. Test your kitty every time he/she is sick as a variety of symptoms are associated with the viruses. Cats that go outdoors or live with an infected cat, should be tested annually or anytime they are sick.

Testing is needed if your cat:

- Has never been tested before.
- Is a newly adopted cat or kitten.
- Lives with an infected cat.
- Is sick, even if he/she has tested negative in the past.
- May have been exposed to an infected cat.
- Is going to have a feline leukemia vaccine.

Viruses are spread through saliva or urine

Feline Leukemia (FeLV) is spread when saliva or urine of an infected cat comes into contact with an uninfected cat. Kittens born to infected mothers also often have the virus. If you have an infected cat in your home, the virus can be transmitted by food and water bowls, litter boxes, or grooming. **FIV** is spread when an infected cat bites another. Rarely does an infected mother infect her kittens. FIV, unlike FeLV, survives outside the body for only a few minutes.

The viruses affect the immune system

FIV and FeLV affect cats in similar ways, primarily by interfering with the immune system's ability to ward off infection. Bacteria and viruses found in everyday living can cause severe illness in FIV and FeLV infected cats. In addition, some cancers and blood diseases are much more common in infected cats.

Signs of FeLV & FIV

In some cats, signs of these viruses may not become apparent until weeks, months or even years after they first become infected. Others may show signs of any of the following symptoms:

Decreased appetite	Weight loss	Decreased grooming	Decreased energy
Weakness	Pale gums	Mouth sores	Diarrhea
Enlarged lymph nodes	Abscesses	Urinary problems	Kidney problems
Respiratory conditions	Neurological disease		

Treatment For FeLV and FIV Positive Cats:

Neither virus can be cured, but both can be managed if caught early. Treatment includes **good nutrition and antiviral medications to support the immune system**. The biggest problem for infected cats isn't the virus, but secondary diseases such as upper respiratory infections. Infected cats' immune systems can't fight off common illness that uninfected cats can.

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NOTE: Our "Feline Family" series covers many important topics to help your feline family members live longer, better and healthier lives. For other topics, or more information, go to www.thecatpracticepc.com or call us at 248-540-3390.