

Considering bringing a new cat home?

Whenever you add a new cat to your household, there is a chance infectious diseases will spread. Talk with your veterinarian about this risk, and ask how you can protect all of your feline family members.



Feline health

Learn more



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Your cat and infectious diseases

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Your cat's risk of infection

All cats are at risk of catching certain infectious diseases. It doesn't matter how old or what breed your cat is—infection is a very real concern. To complicate matters, cats are masters at hiding symptoms of infectious diseases. So what can you do to protect your cat?

Bring your cat to the veterinarian at least annually to monitor health and well-being. Ask your veterinarian about subtle signs to watch for between visits and about preventing infectious diseases, especially these three:

- **Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV):** FIV is a disease that causes suppression of the immune system and may limit a cat's ability to protect itself from common bacteria and viruses. The disease is transmitted cat to cat, usually by biting or scratching. Common signs are decreased appetite, grooming and energy, although there may be no signs at all.
- **Feline leukemia virus (FeLV):** FeLV is a disease that reduces the immune system's ability to protect itself against secondary infections. It is transmitted by casual contact between cats, such as sharing a water bowl, as well as through bite wounds. Common symptoms are similar to FIV: decreased appetite, grooming and energy, although there may be no signs at all.
- **Feline heartworm disease (FHW):** Heartworms are parasites transmitted by mosquitoes. The worms make their home in the cat's circulatory system. Symptoms may include coughing and other respiratory signs, vomiting not associated with eating and weight loss.

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Symptoms of infectious diseases

The chart below includes symptoms you should watch for. However, because the feline infectious diseases previously mentioned often show few—if any—early signs, regular testing is the only way to know for sure if your cat is infected.

You should schedule an appointment with your veterinarian right away if your cat shows any of these signs. With proper management, an infected cat can still live a long, happy life.

Signs of possible infection

Symptoms	FIV	FeLV	FHW
Weight loss	•	•	•
Loss of appetite	•	•	•
Lethargy	•	•	•
Pale gums	•	•	
Bad breath	•	•	
Discharge from eyes/nose	•	•	
Labored breathing			•
Asthma-like symptoms			•
Vomiting	•	•	•

The importance of regular checkups

Discuss with your veterinarian how frequently your cat should have a checkup. Remember, you may not see any warning signs at all; testing is the only way to know for sure if your cat is infected. Regardless of whether the result is positive or negative, testing enables your veterinarian to recommend the treatment, prevention or vaccination program that's right for your cat.

For more on infectious diseases and cat care, visit pethealthnetwork.com/cat-health

