

YOUR VET: the new Google

There's a lot of conflicting and confusing vaccine information on the internet, and you may have a lot of questions and concerns. Don't worry, your veterinary team is here to help.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines are like boot camp for the immune system: They train your pet's body to fight off infectious disease. The body can do that itself, but it takes several days for the immune system to respond. And in the meantime your pet can develop clinical signs of infection, which can vary from flu-like symptoms to life-threatening dehydration and bloody diarrhea.

Vaccines contain either killed or severely weakened bits of viruses or bacteria. They don't cause an infection, but the immune system still sees them as an invader and makes antibodies in response. The body retains a memory of these antibodies, and if your pet is ever exposed to the same infectious organism, the immune system makes antibodies lightning fast.

Core vs. non-core vaccines

You may have heard your veterinary team mention a lifestyle assessment or core versus non-core vaccines. Core vaccines are required to help protect the overall pet and human population. Non-core vaccines are recommended based on the risk of exposure to certain diseases, which we determine through a lifestyle assessment. Not all pets need every non-core vaccine. With vaccines, it's important to work with your veterinarian to tailor the vaccination recommendations so the pet is protected and you feel good.

What if my pet has a bad reaction?

Just like in human infants, vaccinations can make pets grumpy or out of



sorts for a day or two. This is because the immune system is busy making antibodies. Signs that the vaccine is doing its job include mild fever (your pet feels warm), mild loss of appetite, mild swelling at the injection site or mild lethargy. If the vaccine makes your pet sore at the injection site, call your veterinarian, who can prescribe an anti-inflammatory and may recommend medicine to make your pet feel better. If your pet is vomiting or develops hives, this indicates a more serious reaction. Call your veterinarian immediately.

In the past, vaccine technology was not as advanced, and some pets experienced adverse effects. Nowadays, vaccine safety is unparalleled. Vaccines are highly regulated to maintain safety, purity and effectiveness. And vaccine manufacturers guarantee the safety and effectiveness with a warranty that states if your

pet is properly vaccinated through a veterinarian and still develops illness, the company will pay for diagnosis and treatment—that's how much they believe in their products!

Some dogs and cats can have a rare but serious adverse reaction to any type of vaccination, making them poor candidates for vaccination. In this case, talk to your veterinarian about vaccine titers instead. Vaccine titers check the levels of antibodies in your pet's blood.

Do they cause autism?

A lot of people ask that! The British study that linked autism to vaccines was retracted many years ago because the study was proven false. For more information on vaccine safety, check out the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention resource center, which offers more details about the safety of vaccines.