What you should know about vaccines in your pets

The virtual eradication of polio in people is just one example of the vital power provided by vaccinations. And vaccinations are just as important in pets. Throughout their lives, your pets will likely be exposed to several infectious diseases that can cause severe illness or even death. But if you've taken steps to prevent infection through vaccination, you will greatly extend the life of your pets.

Which vaccines should my pet receive?

The veterinarian will recommend several core vaccines that all pets should receive in order to maintain their health and prevent serious disease. For dogs, these vaccines may include rabies, parvovirus, adenovirus, and distemper. For cats, core vaccinations may include rabies, panleukopenia virus, herpesvirus, and calicivirus. If you are boarding a pet, the facility may require vaccination against *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, a bacteria that causes a common and highly contagious disease known as kennel cough. The veterinarian may recommend other vaccines as well, depending on where you live, your pet's lifestyle and level of health, and the risk of your pet passing on disease to other pets or even you.

What should I be on the lookout for after my pet has been vaccinated?

Vaccines can cause side effects, but they are very mild in most cases. Your pet may experience a mild fever, have a decreased appetite, or be a bit sluggish for a day or two after the vaccination. In addition, you may note slight swelling or pain at the vaccination site. These are all normal reactions and do not require medical attention.

However, rarely, more severe reactions to vaccination can occur that may result in swelling in the face or limbs, generalized itching, difficulty breathing, vomiting, diarrhea, or collapse. If any of these more serious signs develop or you are concerned about any reaction in your pet, don't hesitate to contact the veterinary clinic immediately to schedule an appointment.

How often does my pet need to be vaccinated?

The frequency of vaccination will vary depending on where you live. For example, some states require a rabies vaccine once a year in all dogs and cats, while other states may allow less frequent rabies vaccination. The veterinarian can inform you about your state's regulations and the best timing of other vaccinations as well.

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