



Kitten Preventative Care Program

Part 1: Physical Exam

Part 2: Vaccinations

Part 3: Spay/Neuter

Part 4: The Internal Exam: Lab Tests

Part 5: Parasite Control

Part 6: Microchip



PREVENTATIVE CARE PROGRAM FOR YOUR KITTEN

This is an exciting time with the arrival of your new kitten whether this is your first or new addition to your growing family! The doctors and staff at Longleaf Animal Hospital want to provide the best medical care for your new kitten. We have developed a preventative health program with the goal of keeping your family member happy, active and vital throughout their lifetime. Our preventative kitten program can be broken down into six (6) but equally important parts:

1. Physical exam
2. Vaccinations
3. Spay/Neuter
4. The Internal Exam: Lab tests
5. Parasite Control
6. Microchip

We like to start this process at 6-8 weeks age. In order to complete the program, we will be seeing you both every 3 to 4 weeks watching them grow with you until they are 4-6 months old. Do not worry if your kitten is a bit older than 6-8 weeks age when they joined the family. We will guide you through where your kitten fits into this program and make sure they receive everything they need.

Vaccinations and parasite control prevent disease from ever hurting our pets. Physical exams and Lab tests can help us to detect any problems early before symptoms are noticed. This can allow us the potential to make simple changes that can prevent severe conditions or emergency visits in the future.

This handout is meant as a resource. Websites have been included if you are interested in more in-depth information about the recommendations.

1. **Physical exam** is the first step.
 - a. Veterinarians use all their senses to detect any abnormalities in your family member by examining your kitten from nose to tail (eyes, nose, ears, teeth, heart, lungs, abdomen, muscle, bones, lymph nodes, haircoat/skin etc.).
 - i. Sight
 1. Example:
 - a. General attitude?
 - b. How do they carry themselves? Ear position? Body Language? Tail position?
 - c. How do they interaction with everyone in the room?
 - d. Fat or thin?
 - ii. Hearing

1. Example:
 - a. Can you hear the kitten breathe? What does their cough sound like? How many times did they sneeze or cough?
 - b. Use of stethoscope to hear heart, lungs, and gut sounds
 - c. Does their purr or meow sound normal?
 - iii. Touch
 1. Abdomen feels normal? Sensitive to touch?
 2. Any lumps or bumps? Hernias?
 3. Any swelling or wounds?
 4. Haircoat texture and skin feel normal? Feel scabs?
 5. Fat or thin?
 - iv. Smell
 1. Bad breath?
 - a. Diabetes, kidney disease, and dental disease have a distinct smell
 2. Bad body odor?
 - a. Ears and skin diseases can be suspected as soon as you walk in an exam room by the smell
 - b. Any abnormalities detected on physical exam can help us develop an individual plan which may include more specific diagnostic tests to identify the disease or injury
 - c. Serial physical exams during your kitten visits will also help identify any abnormalities that your kitten may have been born with (i.e. congenital) or diseases that occur during growth.
 - d. As an adult, annual examination is the minimum recommended frequency. Depending on your cat's health status, we may recommend more frequent visits to detect changes in their health status quicker
2. Lifestyle Appropriate **Vaccine Protocol**
 - a. 2013 Association of Feline Practitioners Guidelines
<https://catvets.com/guidelines/practice-guidelines/feline-vaccination-guidelines>
 - b. **Core** vaccines are recommended for every cat
 - i. FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia) and Rabies are the core vaccines for felines no matter their lifestyle.
 1. Vaccination for Panleukopenia and Rabies have greatly reduced the occurrence of these fatal diseases.
 2. Vaccinations are extremely important for your kitten because these youngsters are extremely susceptible at this age to these upper respiratory viruses and Panleukopenia. Kittens are losing the natural immunity from their mother's milk (colostrum), but these antibodies interfere with the vaccinations we will be giving. We want the vaccinations on board as soon as your kitten has lost its maternal immunity and we need two of these boosters to work after the maternal immunity is gone. On the other hand, some kittens receive very little or no immunity from their mother's. These babies need protection from their vaccinations much earlier.

3. We are not able to tell which situation your kitten is in so we will follow the American Association of Feline Practitioners guidelines.
 4. We recommend the FVRCP every 3-4 weeks starting at 6-8 weeks of age making sure they receive two vaccinations after 12 weeks after of age
 5. These vaccinations are extremely effective at preventing these diseases, but you must follow the protocol for the vaccines to provide adequate immunity
- ii. Rabies is REQUIRED BY LAW! It is required for kittens greater than 16 weeks of age.
 1. Rabies will be given between 12-16 weeks of age as we are finishing up your FVRCP boosters.
 2. The initial Rabies vaccination will last for 1 year
 - c. **Non-Core** vaccines are recommended for kittens at risk for contracting a specific disease based on your cat's age, lifestyle, and where you live ***See Appendix
- 3. Spay/neuter**
- a. Adapted from WebMD Veterinary Reference from the ASPCA
 - i. <https://pets.webmd.com/reasons-spay-neuter-pet>
 - ii. Spaying: removing the ovaries and uterus of a female pet-is a veterinary procedure that requires minimal hospitalization and offers lifelong health benefits.
 - iii. Neutering: Removing the testicles of your male pet-will vastly improve your pet's behavior and keep him close to home.

Benefits of spaying and neutering

- **Spaying and neutering your pet is good for the community.**
Stray animals pose a real problem in many parts of the country. They can prey on wildlife, cause car accidents, damage the local fauna and frighten children. Spaying and neutering packs a powerful punch in reducing the number of animals on the streets.
- **Spaying and neutering helps fight pet overpopulation.**
Every year, millions of cats and dogs of all ages and breeds are euthanized or suffer as strays. These high numbers are the result of unplanned litters that could have been prevented by spaying or neutering.
- **It is highly cost-effective.**
The cost of your pet's spay/neuter surgery is a lot less than the cost of having and caring for a litter. It also beats the cost of treatment when your unneutered tom escapes and gets into fights with the neighborhood stray!
- **Spaying or neutering will NOT make your pet fat.**
Lack of exercise and overfeeding will cause your pet to pack on the extra pounds-not neutering. Your pet will remain fit and trim as long as you continue to provide exercise and monitor food intake.

Spaying	Neutering
<p>Your female pet will live a longer, healthier life. Spaying helps prevent uterine infections and breast cancer, which is fatal in about 90 percent of cats. Spaying your pet before her first heat offers the best protection from these diseases.</p>	<p>Neutering provides major health benefits for your male. Neutering your male companion prevents testicular cancer.</p>
<p>Your spayed female won't go into heat. While cycles can vary, female felines usually go into heat four to five days every three weeks during breeding season. In an effort to advertise for mates, they'll yowl and urinate more frequently-sometimes all over the house!</p>	<p>Your male cat won't want to roam away from home. An intact male will do just about anything to find a mate! That includes jumping over fences and making like Houdini to escape from the house. And once he's free to roam, he risks injury in traffic and fights with other males.</p>
	<p>Your neutered male will be much better behaved. Neutered cats focus their attention on their human families. On the other hand, unneutered cats may mark their territory by spraying strong-smelling urine all over the house. Many aggression problems can be avoided by early neutering.</p>

- b. <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/spayneuter-your-pet>
- c. The recommendation for spaying and neutering for felines is 4 to 6 months of age.
- 4. "The internal exam: **Laboratory testing for parasites, parasitic diseases and general health**"
 - a. Not all diseases can be detected with a physical exam. These are silent, but deadly diseases. Your cat may be acting completely normal at home.
 - b. Feline Leukemia Virus (**FeLV**) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (**FIV**) testing
 - i. Once contracted these viruses are a "life sentence" for a cat. They remain infected for their lifetime and will continually deal with the effects of these diseases
 - ii. Both viruses cause suppression of the immune system which can mean a lifetime of poor health and even death
 - iii. These are cat-only diseases that are transmitted from their mother, bites, mating, and close living quarters
 - iv. Who should be tested?

1. Any cats and kittens about to be adopted or introduced into a new household
2. Any cats 30 days after recent exposure such as bite wound or abscess
3. Any cats about to be vaccinated for FeLV
4. Any sick cats with signs consistent of these diseases, regardless age, previous negative status and vaccination status

v. **Fecal exam**

1. A fecal (or stool) exam looks for intestinal parasites using a microscope because the parasites are not seen by the naked eye.
2. Many of these parasites such as roundworms, hookworms, and coccidia can cause diarrhea which may lead to life-threatening dehydration and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)
3. Hookworms can suck enough blood from the small intestine that a kitten will require a blood transfusion in order to survive a severe hookworm infestation.
4. Roundworms and hookworms can be transmitted from their mother. They can cause disease as early as 2 weeks of age.
5. We want our children and grandchildren to be able to play with their new kitten, but we must be aware that certain parasites such as roundworms and hookworms can cause serious diseases such as blindness and skin conditions in us too! To keep our children and whole family safe, our kittens and all pets must be kept free of these parasites!
6. We recommended that we obtain at least 2 fecal samples that have no parasites seen during their initial kitten exams
7. Companion Animal Parasite Council
<https://capcvet.org/guidelines/general-guidelines/>

c. Age appropriate **bloodwork and urine tests**

- i. The physical exam is very useful for determining many abnormalities, but it will not detect subtle, internal changes.
- ii. Early detection can give us more time to intervene and change outcomes and it can also prevent emergencies.
- iii. These tests are helpful in identifying common diseases early like kidney disease, liver conditions as well evaluate the condition of the circulatory and immune system
- iv. When you have your kitten spayed/neutered, they are about to undergo their first anesthetic procedure. No anesthesia is without risk. We recommended that all pets receive pre-anesthetic bloodwork that helps to reduce these risks by detecting these internal abnormalities. In young animals, bloodwork can help identify congenital problems that may complicate anesthesia if left undetected.

5. **Parasite control** is another important part of a preventative care because parasites can cause serious diseases themselves as well as transmit disease
 - a. Heartworm, intestinal parasite, flea, and tick medications

- i. Many of the flea, tick, roundworm, hookworm, ear mite and heartworm medication used to prevent infestations of these parasites are safe to start as early as 8 weeks of age
 - ii. Deciding what products are right for your kitten is a discussion needed with your veterinarian based on your cat's health status and your lifestyle.
 - b. Companion Animal Parasite Council <https://capcvet.org/>
 - c. American Heartworm Society <https://www.heartwormsociety.org/>
- 6. Microchip
 - a. A microchip is a permanent form of ID for your pet
 - b. Microchipping is a simple procedure. A veterinarian simply injects a microchip for pets, about the size of a grain of rice (12mm), beneath the surface of your pet's skin between the shoulder blades. The process is similar to an injection and takes only a few seconds. No anesthetic is required.
 - c. The microchip itself has no internal energy source, so it will last the life of your pet. It is read by passing a microchip scanner over the pet's shoulder blades. The scanner emits a low radio frequency that provides the power necessary where the chip is located to transmit the microchip's unique ID code and positively identify the pet.
 - d. If your pet gets lost and is taken to an animal shelter or veterinarian, they will scan the microchip to read its unique ID code. This is the number used by HomeAgain to identify the pet and retrieve your contact information, which is used to contact you and reunite you with your pet.
 - e. <https://www.homeagain.com/what-is-a-microchip.html>
 - f. Longleaf Animal Hospital places the HomeAgain microchip
 - i. This microchip can be read by scanners worldwide which is required for families who want to travel with their pets with overseas.
 - a. By having a HomeAgain microchip, you can obtain free advice from a toxicologist at the SPCA pet poison control hotline (1-888-426-4435)
 - ii. Without the microchip, the consultation fee would be \$65 per case.

General resources:

1. For all your after-hour questions and emergencies, call Small Animal Emergency Services
 - b. "When we are closed, they are open!"
 - c. Phone: 910-246-0405
 - d. 5901 US Highway 1 North, Vass, NC
 - e. Website: <http://www.saesnc.org/>
2. ASPCA pet poison control
 - a. Great resource to quickly answer: "Is this poisonous or not?"
 - b. Staffed 24 hours a day/7 day a week by toxicologists
 - c. <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control>
 - d. 1-888-426-4435
 - e. One time \$65 consultation fee unless you have Home Again Microchip then it is FREE!
3. Veterinary Partner Website is a great general resource on everything to do with veterinary medicine written for owners <https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/> that is trusted by veterinarians
4. On our website, www.longleafanimalhospital.com, you can find links to:
 - a. Our on-line pharmacy, Vetsource, through the Home Delivery button at the bottom left of our home page
 - b. Here under client center, you will find ways to connect with us electronically by signing up for Petly where you can request appointments and prescriptions on-line, send a message, and view your pet's medical history yourself.
5. Two great websites for everything cat including health and behavior!
 - a. Ohio State Indoor Cat Initiative <https://indoorpet.osu.edu/cats>
 - b. American Association of Feline Practitioners <https://catfriendly.com/keep-your-cat-healthy/cat-friendly-practice/>



Feline Vaccination Protocol

Name of Core Vaccine	Disease	Booster interval
FVRCP combo	Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis-Calicivirus-Panleukopenia	Administer the first dose as early as 6 weeks of age, then every 3–4 weeks until 16–20 weeks of age; Revaccinate 1 year after primary series; thereafter, boost every 3 years, lifelong
Rabies	Rabies	Every 3 years after initial 1-year vaccination

Name of Non-Core Vaccine	Disease	Booster interval
FeLV Vaccine***	Feline Leukemia	Administer the first dose as early as 6 weeks of age, then every 3–4 weeks until 16–20 weeks of age; Revaccinate annually

Who needs to be vaccinated for Feline Leukemia

- cats that go outdoors
- cats that have direct contact with cats of unknown status or in high turnover situations such as foster homes or other group housing
- cats that live with FeLV-positive cats
- all kittens because the lifestyles of kittens frequently change after acquisition and they may subsequently become at risk for FeLV exposure