



## **Facts about Feline Calicivirus**

### ***What is feline calicivirus (FCV?)***

FCV is a common infectious disease in cats around the world. It mainly affects the upper respiratory system, but more aggressive strains can spread to the rest of the body and affect other organs. It is most prevalent in environments where there are a lot of cats in a limited area, as in animal shelters or breeding colonies.

### ***What are the signs and symptoms of FCV?***

The signs and symptoms of FCV virus vary depending on the cat's overall health, the degree to which it has been vaccinated against the virus, and the strain of calicivirus involved. Common signs may include:

- Fever
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Discharge from the eyes or nose
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Swelling of the eyelids
- Swelling or ulcers in or around the mouth

Less common symptoms include:

- Limping
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Pneumonia
- Chronic ulcers of the nose, mouth, or tongue
- Swelling of the limbs
- Skin sores
- Liver disease
- Bleeding under the skin or in the digestive tract

### ***How is FCV transmitted?***

- Transmission occurs through contact with the saliva or eye or nose discharge of an infected cat. Transmission routes include inhalation of sneeze droplets, grooming between cats, sharing dishes, and sharing litter pans.
  - FCV persists in the environment for 1-4 weeks, meaning indirect transmission of the virus can occur by exposing a new cat to a contaminated environment.
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- Young cats, especially those under 4-6 months of age, are the most susceptible to FCV since their immune systems are not fully mature.
- There is no evidence that FCV is transmissible to people or other animals.

### ***Is there a vaccine to prevent FCV?***

- Yes. Vaccination against FCV is recommended for all cats. It is especially recommended for kittens, cats with access to the outdoors, and cats in multi-cat environments.
- Vaccination may not prevent FCV infection but will reduce the severity of symptoms that a cat experiences from the virus.
- FCV mutates frequently in the environment, so some vaccines incorporate more than one strain of FCV to provide a broader range of protection.

### ***Treatment and Management***

- There is no cure for FCV, though most cats recover from their symptoms in 1-3 weeks if they receive appropriate supportive care under the direction of a veterinarian.
- Once affected, most cats will continue to shed the virus in their nasal secretions and saliva for at least 30 days, even if their symptoms resolve. Some cats will remain contagious for life.
- FCV infected cats should remain indoors to limit their exposure to other respiratory infections and prevent the spread of the virus in the local cat population.
- In cats with persistent FCV symptoms, regular trips to the veterinarian can help manage symptoms, improve comfort, and limit secondary bacterial infections.

*Adapted by Dr. Lisa Mekka from website publications from Cornell University and International Cat Care*

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