

## Common Illnesses in Cats By Best Friends Animal Society

The following information is intended to help you better understand and recognize some of the more common illnesses in cats.

### **Panleukopenia (Feline Distemper)**

Panleukopenia (sometimes called feline distemper) is a viral infection that most commonly affects kittens and young cats. Left untreated, panleukopenia is almost always fatal. Even with intensive treatment, the majority of cats showing signs of panleukopenia will die. Unfortunately, this illness can be frustrating to deal with because the virus can survive in the environment for up to a year. This means that other unvaccinated cats can become infected with panleukopenia simply by coming into contact with places where an infected cat has been. A bleach solution is the best way to disinfect areas that may have been contaminated. The vaccine for panleukopenia is considered very effective.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Fever, diarrhea, lethargy, vomiting, loss of appetite

**Treatment:** Veterinary care, including fluid therapy and antibiotics

**Transmission:** Very contagious to other cats, especially through contact with infected feces or vomit

### **Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)**

The term “upper respiratory infection” is used to refer to any illness that affects a cat’s upper respiratory system. URIs are very common in shelter cats. Some of the more serious URIs (for which there are vaccines) are listed separately in this section. Following is information that applies to all upper respiratory infections.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever

**Treatment:** Veterinary care, including antibiotics

**Transmission:** Very contagious to other cats

### **Rhinotracheitis**

Rhinotracheitis is a type of upper respiratory infection. Rhino often infects cats that also have calicivirus. The vaccine for rhinotracheitis is considered very effective.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Sneezing, coughing, fever, runny nose and eyes

**Treatment:** Veterinary care, including antibiotics

**Transmission:** Very contagious to other cats

### **Calicivirus**

Calicivirus is a virus that attacks the lungs and lower respiratory tract, usually causing pneumonia. Ulcers are often seen on the tongue and lips. The vaccine for calicivirus is considered very effective.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Loss of appetite, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, oral ulcers

**Treatment:** Veterinary care, including antibiotics

**Transmission:** Very contagious to other cats

### **Chlamydia**

Also called pneumonitis, chlamydia attacks the respiratory tract and produces conjunctivitis. Chlamydia is a bacterium. The vaccine for chlamydia is considered very effective.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Loss of appetite, fever, nasal discharge, red eyes

**Treatment:** Veterinary care, including antibiotics

**Transmission:** Very contagious to other cats

**Ear mites** Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Itching, scratching, head-shaking, dark brown discharge in the ears

**Treatment:** Veterinary care, including an injection or ear meds

**Transmission:** Contagious to other cats and dogs, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

**Ringworm** Ringworm is a fungus related to athlete’s foot, not actually a worm.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Irregularly shaped areas of fur loss; the skin in these areas will usually appear rough and scaly

**Treatment:** Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

**Transmission:** Very contagious to other cats, dogs, and people, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

**Fleas** Fleas are tiny insects that feed on the blood of cats, dogs, humans, and other animals. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas usually attack in large numbers.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Intense itching and scratching

**Treatment:** Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

**Transmission:** Very contagious to other cats, dogs, and people

### **Round, Tape, and Hook Worms**

Worms affect a cat’s digestive system. They are most commonly seen in kittens and young cats.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Large belly, diarrhea, an inability to gain weight

**Treatment:** Veterinary care, including de-worming medication

**Transmission:** Contagious to other cats and dogs, but only through contact with (and subsequent ingestion of) feces.