

5 Common Cat-health Myths

Myth #1: Cats don't need annual exams

Reality: [Annual examinations](#) are the best way to detect medical problems early and to ensure your cat is protected against preventable diseases. We take our kids to the pediatrician for wellness visits, so why should our cats be any different? Cats get sick too. They suffer from many of the same illnesses we do like [obesity](#), [diabetes](#), [thyroid disease](#), and [kidney disease](#).

Cats obviously can't tell us when they're sick and to make matters worse, [they are masters at hiding illness](#). You may not notice any signs or symptoms until a disease is very advanced. That's why routine physical examinations are so important. They allow your veterinarian to check your cat over from head to tail for subtle signs of illness. Your veterinarian can also utilize screening tests to detect diseases early and to start treatment promptly. The fact is, bringing your cat to the vet at least once a year for a check-up is the best way to ensure your cat lives the healthiest, happiest life possible.

Myth #2: Indoor cats don't need vaccines

Reality: Cats can be exposed to a number of different infectious diseases, even if they live indoors. Upper respiratory infections can be carried on your clothes or shoes or can spread through an open window or screen door. Not to mention that even indoor cats can sneak out.

While strictly indoor cats may require fewer vaccines than outdoor cats, the fact remains that indoor cats may benefit from vaccines that protect against certain upper respiratory viruses: feline rhinotracheitis, [feline calicivirus](#), and feline panleukopenia. In addition, some states require cats to be vaccinated against [rabies](#). Speak with your veterinarian to find out what vaccines are appropriate for your particular cat based on his age, lifestyle and risks. You can also get information about vaccines from the [AAHA-AVMA Feline Preventive Healthcare Guidelines](#).

Myth #3 Indoor cats don't get parasites

Reality: Unfortunately, even indoor cats aren't immune to [parasites](#). Pesky bugs like [fleas](#) can be brought into your home by your dog or by rodents. You can even move into a house with an existing flea problem. (Fleas in the pupa stage can remain dormant for months.) In addition, [mosquitoes](#) transmit heartworm disease and

we all know how easy it is for them to get inside.

Just because your cat doesn't go outside don't assume they are safe from parasites. Be on the lookout for parasites and speak to your veterinarian about parasitic screening tests and preventative medications that might be appropriate for your cat.

Myth #4 Indoor cats do not need microchips

Reality: All pets, even strictly indoor cats, should have [microchips](#) and ideally collars and ID tags. What happens when your cat sneaks out an open door or window, or worse yet, gets lost during an [earthquake](#), [hurricane or tornado](#)? They become an outdoor cat with no identification! Collars and tags allow a neighbor to return your cat directly to you, but unfortunately, collars can break or fall off. Microchips provide a more reliable means of identification. Of course, for them to work, make sure you register and keep your contact information up-to-date.

The fact is, accidents happen and it is always better to be safe than sorry. Being sure your pet has proper identification (collar, tag and microchips) is the best way to improve the odds that your pet will be returned home if he is ever lost.

Myth #5 Cats don't need exercise

Reality: The reality is all animals, even cats, benefit from exercise. Exercise is the best way to keep your cat trim and healthy. Like us, cats can suffer from obesity and the problems associated with being overweight, such as, [arthritis](#) and diabetes. You can keep your cat active by playing with a laser pointer. Most cats love to chase a laser pointer (and most humans find this entertaining too). [Editor's Note: [Check out the Petcube!](#)] Some cats can also learn to play fetch. The goal is to find the toy or activity that gets your pet moving. Don't be afraid to ask your veterinarian for ideas and help getting your lazy cat off the couch.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.