

# Feline Distemper Virus

*More correctly called panleukopenia, this disease is both highly contagious and deadly*

## Overview

Panleukopenia, also known as feline distemper, is an extremely contagious and deadly disease caused by a virus. The virus is spread through contact with an infected cat's saliva, urine, blood, nasal discharge, or feces. There is no cure for panleukopenia and, without treatment, it has a high mortality rate. The most important fact to know about panleukopenia is, that it is preventable through vaccination.

While cats of all ages can become infected with the distemper virus, kittens—especially those with a poor immune system or those who are unvaccinated—are at the greatest risk for this virus, which causes severe gastrointestinal symptoms.

## Clinical signs

They clinical signs of feline distemper are:

- Depression
- [Anorexia](#)
- [Vomiting](#)
- [Diarrhea](#)
- Blood in stool
- [Lethargy](#) and weakness

## Diagnosis

Your veterinarian will perform a thorough physical exam and take a detailed history of your pet, including vaccination status.

Additionally, your veterinarian may recommend the following diagnostic tests:

- Chemistry tests to evaluate kidney, liver, and pancreatic function, as well as sugar levels
- A feline leukemia virus (FeLV) test
- A feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) test
- A complete blood count (CBC)
- Electrolyte tests to ensure your pet isn't dehydrated or suffering from an electrolyte imbalance
- Urine tests to screen for urinary tract infection and other disease, and to evaluate the ability of the kidneys to concentrate urine

- X-rays of the chest and abdomen
- Fecal evaluation and microscopic examination

## Treatment

Unfortunately, many cases of panleukopenia are rapidly fatal. With aggressive therapy, many cats can make a full recovery, although the prognosis is guarded. Your veterinarian will recommend supportive therapy tailored to your cat's needs and may include hospitalization, fluid therapy, antibiotics, medication for vomiting and diarrhea, and nutritional support.

## Prevention

This virus can be prevented through vaccination!

*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.*