



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus)

FIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, leaving a cat vulnerable to other infections.

TRANSMISSION:

Primarily through bite wounds.

CLINICAL SIGNS:

- **Acute phase:** Occurs 1-3 months after infection. The virus is reproducing in the lymph nodes. Cats in this phase may have enlarged lymph nodes, fever, depression, and lack of appetite.
- **Asymptomatic Phase:** This phase may last for months or years. During this time the virus is replicating slowly in white blood cells. Cats may have abnormalities on routine blood panels (low white blood cells or increased blood proteins), but otherwise show no signs of illness.
- **Progressive Immunocompromised State:** This is the phase where secondary infections occur, most commonly infections of the skin, eyes, urinary tract or upper respiratory tract. Inflammation of the gums and severe dental disease is common in cats with FIV. Cats at this state are more likely to develop cancer and immune-mediated blood disorders than healthy cats. Weight loss, seizures, behavioral changes, and neurologic disorders are all possible. Once a cat becomes significantly ill survival time is usually only a few months.

TESTING:

We do a blood test called an ELISA (or snap) test that looks for antibodies to FIV in the blood.

- **False Negatives:** Cats can test negative and have the virus:
 - o If they have been infected recently (within preceding 2-3 months) they may not yet have produced enough antibodies to show up on the test.
 - o Cats in the end stages may be so compromised that they no longer produce antibodies
- **False Positives:** Cats can test positive and not have the virus:
 - o Infected Queens pass antibodies to their kittens, but that doesn't mean that the kittens are necessarily infected. Kittens younger than 6 months should be retested every 60 days until they are at least 6 months old. If they are still testing positive at 6 months, then they are infected.
 - o If a cat has been vaccinated for FIV they will test positive.

TREATMENT:

There is no cure for FIV, but we can do is to try to reduce a cat's risk of getting secondary infections and prevent the spread of FIV. Both goals can best be accomplished by keeping infected cats indoors. It is important that FIV cats get prompt veterinary care whenever they do show signs of illness.

PREVENTION:

The only way to protect cats is to prevent their exposure to the virus by keeping them indoors.

CLEANING:

FIV does not survive for more than a few hours in most environments. However, because FIV infected cats frequently are infected with other infectious agents cleaning is important.

ZOONOSIS???:

Although FIV is like HIV, FIV is not transmissible to people.