

Puppy Shots **keep YOUR puppy safe with puppy vaccinations!**

Why are puppy shots such a big deal? The answer is simple.....

puppy vaccinations save the lives of puppies, just like yours, every single day.

And keeping these vaccinations up to date is one of the most important things you can do to give your new (and furry!) family member the best chance of growing up healthy and strong.

Canine vaccines protect your precious puppy from some of the most common and contagious dog illnesses around, including Parvo, Distemper, Hepatitis and Rabies. Several of these diseases are very dangerous and can be deadly to an unvaccinated puppy/dog, even when treated promptly. So, why take any chances when a few, well-timed, sets of puppy shots could literally save his life?

About Puppy Vaccinations

There are several common (but very serious, and potentially fatal), dog illnesses that you simply **MUST** protect your puppy from - and that's where canine vaccinations come in!

Did you know that if your puppy catches Canine Parvovirus (Parvo) she only has a 20% chance of surviving if it's left untreated?. Scary isn't it?

Of course, you'd get your pup the best possible treatment if she got sick, but there's no 'cure' for Parvo (just supportive care, antibiotics and fluids which give her between a 20 and 50% chance of survival), or many other similar diseases such as Distemper.

What puppy shots are needed, and when?

Very young puppies have a certain amount of natural immunity that they get from their mother's milk, but that wears off somewhere between 5 and 8 weeks of age. After that they are at significant risk of contracting potentially fatal canine diseases. Depending on the area that you live in, dog vaccination regulations may vary a little. The little box below shows a 'puppy shots timeline' that covers the general recommendations for a puppy immunization schedule here in the South Africa:

Vaccination Schedule for Puppies and Dogs

Distemper	- an airborne viral disease of the lungs, intestines and brain
Hepatitis	- a viral disease of the liver
Leptospirosis	- a bacterial disease of the urinary tract
Parainfluenza	- infectious bronchitis
Parvovirus	- a viral disease of the intestines
Rabies	- a viral disease fatal to humans and other animals
Corona	- a viral disease of the intestines
Bordatella	- a bacterial infection of the upper respiratory system (kennel cough)

Puppies (6 weeks to 1 year)

6 – 8 weeks	- first puppy shot (DHPP) + Corona
11-12 weeks	- second puppy shot (DHPP) + Corona
15-16 weeks	- third puppy shot (DHPP) + Corona
over 4 months	- Rabies (repeat 1 year later)
7-9 months	- first heartworm test

Adult Dogs (after 1 year)

DHLPP	- Yearly
Corona	- Yearly
Heartworm Test	- Yearly
Rabies	- Every two years (after 2 nd shot)
Bordatella	- Yearly

Once your puppy has had three sets of the combination puppy shots (aka the five-in-one canine vaccinations), plus the Rabies shot, she will generally be protected for one year. After that annual dog 'booster' vaccinations will need to be given. Follow your veterinary advice and recommendations about vaccination procedure. There are also some additional puppy shots that your veterinarian might recommend. These include vaccinations for Bordatella (commonly known as Kennel Cough), Giardia and Lyme Disease.

Whether or not your pup needs these particular puppy shots will depend on variable such as what area you live in and whether or not she will be spending a lot of time at puppy day care etc.

Some dog breeds are particularly vulnerable to Canine Parvovirus and should have a 4th Parvo vaccination to improve protection. This is usually given at around 16 weeks of age.

Allergic reactions to Canine Vaccines

Although most puppies hardly even notice when their puppy shots are given, and show no ill effects afterward, it's not terribly unusual for a pup to have an allergic reaction of some sort to a vaccine.

Most of the time these reactions to puppy vaccinations are mild, and last only a day or two. But occasionally they can be severe enough to need veterinary attention. Because of this, it's a good idea to be aware of the potential signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction. These can include:

• Mild Reactions

Most reactions are mild and symptoms can include a lump/swelling/knot at the site of the injection itself, a slight fever, lethargy or a depressed or sad looking little pup! Sometimes there will be some loss of appetite and maybe even loose stools for a day or so. BUT, don't worry, in these cases your puppy is just feeling a little tired or 'off colour' and the symptoms are short lived and don't usually need veterinary treatment. **Note:** *Although these symptoms usually show up within a 3 - 24 hours of vaccination, they can appear much later, sometimes several days to a week after the puppy shots were given.*

• Moderate Reactions

Symptoms of a moderate allergic reaction to puppy immunizations usually involve swelling and/or hives. Often particularly noticeable around the mouth, eyes, face and neck, although welts can appear anywhere on your puppy's body. This kind of reaction usually occurs within a few hours of the vaccination. It can progress and become severe, so if you notice any swelling or hives appearing on your pup, take him back to the veterinarian right away.

• Severe Reactions

The most serious allergic reaction to puppy shots is *anaphylaxis*. This is life threatening and usually strikes within minutes of the vaccine being given. It may start out with vomiting/diarrhoea and a loss of balance. It causes a sudden drop in your puppies' blood pressure, and generalized swelling which can result in breathing difficulties, seizures and even death. It's an emergency situation and if you have already left the veterinarian you need to get your pup back there immediately. He/she may need oxygen, IV fluids or other medical intervention, so don't waste any time.

Luckily moderate to severe allergic reactions to puppy shots are pretty rare and are generally much less of a danger to your puppy than the diseases they prevent.

Although a puppy or dog can react badly to any vaccine, there seems to be a higher incidence of allergic reaction to the vaccines for Rabies, Parvo and Leptosirosis. Also, there are some dog breeds that are more likely to experience these type of issues. So, the bottom line is that you need to watch your puppy closely for the first day or so after he's had his puppy shots. Any major reaction is *most likely* to occur within 24 hours. An allergic reaction of any sort is unlikely to happen after the first shot though, it's subsequent ones that you should pay particular attention to. Although it's necessary to be aware of what *could* happen, don't panic about this!

Thousands of puppies are vaccinated every day with no ill-effects, or only a very mild reaction. Many, MANY more pups die from the diseases these canine vaccinations prevent, so protecting your puppy is vitally important.