

How to Handle a Vaccine Reaction in Your Dog | Greensboro Vet

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6–8 minutes

Why should I vaccinate my dog?

Your dog needs vaccinations, but these can each bring risks and benefits for your pet. Our Greensboro vets offer advice on how to handle a reaction to a vaccine.

Why should I vaccinate my dog?

It's best to have your dog receive their necessary vaccinations on schedule, early in life, so they get off to a good start and have a chance at great long-term health.

Diseases, including parvovirus, rabies and hepatitis can quickly cause serious health issues, and even be fatal - especially in puppies.

Vaccines will help prevent your dog from developing these conditions in the first place, which we always prefer to treating them once your pup starts to exhibit symptoms - both because these diseases negatively impact your pet's health and because treatment can be expensive.

Does my pet need all the dog vaccinations that are available?

Just like us, each dog is different, and yours will have varying risk factors based on their breed, age and lifestyle. These will factor into your vet's assessment of which vaccinations your dog requires. Your vet will then be able to recommend which immunizations would best protect your pet.

What are the most common vaccine reactions in dogs?

Any medical procedure - including vaccines - can have potential adverse effects. Though it can be distressing to watch your beloved pup have an adverse reaction to a vaccine, remember that most of these reactions are mild and short-lived.

It's helpful to know some symptoms of common allergic reactions to vaccines so you can spot them if they do develop. Plus, knowing what to do if your dog does have a reaction can help make getting vaccinated less stressful for you and your four-legged friend.

Sneezing & Cold-Like Symptoms

While most vaccines are administered by injections, Bordetella bronchiseptica virus and parainfluenza vaccines are provided by sending nose drops or sprays into your dog's nose. In response to these vaccines, dogs may display symptoms that mimic a cold.

Reactions can include a runny nose, sneezing and coughing. Most dogs will recover from these symptoms within a couple of days, but if recovery is taking longer or your pup's reaction is more severe, get in touch with your veterinarian.

Lethargy

The most common reaction dogs display after getting their shots is general discomfort and lethargy. This may be paired with a mild fever as your dog's immune system works and responds to the vaccination.

These mild symptoms are normal and appropriate, and should only last about one or two days before fading away. If your dog doesn't appear to be back to normal within the two-day timeline, contact the vet.

Serious Reactions to Vaccinations

Though most reactions dogs may have to vaccinations will be short-lived and mild, more severe reactions requiring immediate attention may occur in a few rare cases.

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that may include hives, breathing difficulties, vomiting, facial swelling, itchiness and diarrhea. The condition can occur either very soon after the vaccine is injected or up to 48 hours after vaccination.

If any of these symptoms appear in your dog, call your vet immediately for urgent or [emergency care](#), or contact the emergency veterinary clinic closest to you.

How will my vet treat a vaccine reaction?

Antihistamines and cortisone can be used to treat reactions that are confined to the skin and deemed not life-threatening. These treatments will generally clear up issues quickly - and safely.

For severe cases, your veterinarian may use epinephrine to

provide immediate relief from life-threatening distress in your dog. If your pet has a slow heart rate, weakness and decreased blood pressure, immediate medical assistance is required as he may be in shock. You may also notice pale mucous membranes and a gray tongue.

In these circumstances, intravenous fluids and medications will be administered to help your dog recover and restore vital signs.

Cortisone may also be used in these situations.

Fortunately, your veterinarian will often be able to effectively treat adverse reactions as a result of vaccinations. With proper treatment, your pooch should recover shortly.

Can I prevent my dog from having a reaction to a vaccine?

Vaccines help protect your dog's long-term health from serious, often deadly diseases and the risk of having a serious vaccine reaction is very low.

However, if your dog has been previously impacted by an adverse reaction to a vaccine, it's important to let your veterinarian know so this history can be recorded. Your veterinarian may recommend skipping a specific vaccine in the future if it has previously caused a reaction.

When multiple vaccinations are administered during one appointment, your dog's risk of an adverse reaction to vaccinations increases somewhat.

To help minimize risk of an adverse reaction, your vet may recommend spreading your dog's shots out over many days rather than all at once.

Should I have my dog revaccinated?

If an adverse reaction occurs the first time your dog has a vaccine, having him or her revaccinated after the episode can lead to one of these circumstances:

- No inappropriate or adverse reactions. The vaccination increases the dog's immunity to the disease.
- A vaccine-induced reaction may occur, similar to his or her previous episode.
- A serious, potentially fatal vaccine-induced reaction.

You and your veterinarian will need to complete a thorough assessment of risks and benefits when it comes to vaccines. If a reaction does happen, it could be dangerous to revaccinate your dog for the same disease.

If your local municipality has legally mandated the vaccine, you can request that your veterinarian advocate on your behalf by sending a statement using animal hospital letterhead that another dose of the vaccine may prove life-threatening for your pet.

Note: The advice provided in this post is intended for informational purposes and does not constitute medical advice regarding pets. For an accurate diagnosis of your pet's condition, please make an appointment with your vet.

Do you think your dog may be having a reaction to a vaccine?
Our experienced veterinarians are able to provide urgent and emergency care during our regular business hours. [Contact our Greensboro vets](#) right away.

