

What to Do If Your Dog Has a Reaction to a Vaccine | North Asheville Vet



Typically the risk of your pup having a severe reaction to a vaccine is very low, and in most cases well worth the risk. Vaccines offer your dog protection from a number of very serious conditions that can be both difficult and expensive to treat. Today our North Asheville vets share advice on how to handle a reaction to a vaccine.

Why Vaccinate Your Dog

[Vaccines](#) starting when your dog is just a puppy help to give your dog their best chance at a long, healthy life. Vaccination boosters are also necessary on a regular basis to help your adult dog maintain their protection against diseases. Some of the most important vaccinations for puppies include hepatitis, parvovirus and rabies.

That said, not all dogs need all the vaccines that are available. Which vaccines your dog should have depends upon where you live, your dog's age, and your pet's lifestyle. These factors combine to determine your dog's risk of contracting diseases that can be vaccinated against. Your vet can help you determine which immunizations your dog should receive.

Common Reactions to Vaccines in Dogs

Any medical procedure has the potential to lead to an adverse reaction. Reactions to a vaccine are uncommon however when they do occur they are typically very mild and short-lived.

Knowing what the symptoms of a vaccine reaction are can help you to spot a reaction if your dog does have one and may help to make vaccination time less stressful for you and your dog.

- **Lethargy** - Sluggishness and mild discomfort are the most common reactions dogs experience to being vaccinated. Sometimes this is also accompanied by a mild fever caused by your pup's immune system responding to the vaccination. These mild symptoms are normal and should only last a day or two. If your dog isn't back to normal within 48 hours, contact your vet to let them know.

- **Sneezing & Cold-Like Symptoms** - The majority of vaccines are administered by injection but the parainfluenza and Bordetella bronchiseptica virus vaccines are given in the form of nasal sprays or drops. Reactions to these vaccines tend to look like basic cold symptoms such as sneezing, coughing and a runny nose. Expect your pup to recover from these symptoms within a couple of days. If these symptoms become more severe or it's taking your pooch longer to recover, it's a good idea to contact your vet.

Serious Reactions to Vaccinations

While most reactions to vaccines that dogs have will be mild and short-lived, in some rare cases our canine companions can have more severe reactions that need immediate medical attention.

- **Anaphylaxis** - This severe allergic reaction can involve facial swelling, diarrhea, itchiness, hives, vomiting and breathing difficulties. This type of severe reaction will usually occur very soon after your pet receives the injection, (typically while you are still at the vet's office) but can happen up to 48 hours after the vaccine is given.
- **Shock** - The symptoms of shock following vaccines can include a slow heart rate, decreased blood pressure and generalized weakness. You may also see a gray tongue and pale mucous membranes.

If your dog displays signs of anaphylaxis or shock, call your vet immediately or contact the emergency veterinary clinic closest to you!

How Vaccine Reactions Are Treated

Fortunately, adverse reactions as a result of vaccinations can often be reversed with proper treatment and your pet should recover quickly.

- Reactions that are not life-threatening and confined to the skin may be treated with cortisone and anti-histamines. Symptoms will usually clear up quickly once treatments begin.
- Both anaphylaxis and shock require immediate veterinary care! Medications and intravenous fluids will be provided to help your dog recover and restore your pet's vital signs. Cortisone and epinephrine may also be used in these circumstances.

Preventing Dog Reactions to Vaccines

Your pup's vaccinations help to protect your pet's long-term health, and it's important to remember that the risk of having a serious reaction to a vaccine is very low for most dogs.

Nonetheless, if your dog has experienced an adverse reaction to a vaccine in the past it's important to inform your veterinarian so this history can be recorded. If a previous reaction has occurred your vet may recommend skipping a specific vaccination in the future.

There is a small increase in the risk of reactions to vaccines when multiple vaccinations are given during a single appointment. This is especially true for smaller dogs. To help minimize the risk of an adverse reaction in your pet, your veterinarian may recommend spreading your dog's vaccinations out over several days rather than all at once.

Should I have my dog revaccinated?

Knowing your pup's risk of having a reaction again if revaccinated is difficult to predict. Some pets will have no reaction when they have the vaccination a second time, some dogs will experience the same reaction that they had previously, and in rare cases dogs will experience a serious life-threatening reaction to the vaccine.

If your pup has had a reaction to their first round of shots, speak to your vet about the risks and benefits concerning vaccines and your dog's health. Your vet may recommend not vaccinating your pooch for particular diseases based upon your dog's reaction.

In cases where the vaccine is legally mandated by your local municipality, speak to your veterinarian about advocating on your behalf and sending a letter using the animal hospital letterhead explaining that the vaccine could be potentially life-threatening to your pet.

Note: The advice provided in this post is intended for informational purposes and does not constitute medical advice regarding pets.

Is it time for your dog's annual vaccines? [Contact us](#) today to book an appointment for your pet. At Animal Hospital of North Asheville, our vets offer comprehensive veterinary care for pets, including [annual vaccines and parasite prevention](#).