

Vaccine Reactions in Dogs - What Pet Parents Should Know

5–6 minutes

Why does my dog need their shots?

By making sure your dog is [vaccinated early in life, and regularly as an adult](#), you provide them with the best chance at a long, healthy life. Diseases such as rabies, hepatitis, and parvovirus can be very serious and even fatal, particularly in puppies. [Vaccines](#) prevent these diseases from developing in the first place, which is always preferable to treating them once they exist in your pet.

Lifestyle & Core Vaccines

Your vet will consider the risk factors facing your dog based on your dog's breed, age and lifestyle, then advise you on which immunizations are suitable for your dog.

Dog Vaccination Side Effects

Adverse reactions are always possible with medical procedures, and vaccines are no different. For loving pet owners, seeing their pet have a reaction to vaccines can be upsetting but it's important to keep in mind that most reactions are mild and short-lived.

Knowing what the signs of a reaction are and what you should do

if your dog has a reaction can help to make vaccination time less stressful for both you and your dog.

Lethargy

By far, the most common reaction dogs have to getting their shots is a general feeling of lethargy and discomfort, often accompanied by a mild fever. Many of us would describe this feeling as being 'off'. This reaction is your dog's immune system working well and responding to the vaccine appropriately. These mild symptoms are normal and should only last a day or two. If your dog isn't back to normal within a couple of days, contact your vet.

Lumps & Bumps

As with feeling 'off', lumps and bumps can be a common reaction to vaccinations in dogs. Following the vaccination, a small, firm bump may develop at the spot where the needle was injected into the skin or muscle, leaving the area somewhat tender. These bumps develop due to your dog's immune system rushing to resolve the localized irritation at the site.

That said, any time that the skin is punctured there is a chance of infection. Be sure to keep an eye on the site where the injection was given. Look for signs of swelling, redness, discharge and pain. If left untreated, infected areas may lead to more serious conditions. If you notice the area becoming increasingly red or showing any of the symptoms listed above, contact your vet.

Puppy Yelping After Vaccinations

Mild pain and bruising at the site of the injection can occur in some cases. This may cause your pup to limp or cry a little but always contact your vet if you are concerned about your dog's behavior or symptoms following vaccinations. Your vet will be able to assess the symptoms and let you know whether your pup should be brought into the clinic for an examination.

Sneezing & Cold Like Symptoms

While most vaccines are given by injection, the Bordetella bronchiseptica and parainfluenza virus vaccines are administered by drops or sprays into the dog's nose. Reactions to these vaccines can look much like a cold, and include coughing, sneezing and a runny nose. Most dogs recover from these symptoms within a day or two. If your dog is showing more severe symptoms or does not recover within a couple of days, it's time to call the vet.

Serious Reactions to Vaccinations

Most reactions associated with vaccines are short-lived and mild. Nonetheless, in a few rare cases, more severe reactions can occur and require immediate medical attention. Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction characterized by facial swelling, vomiting, hives, itchiness, diarrhea, and breathing difficulties. Anaphylaxis typically occurs very soon after the dog receives the injection but may occur up to 48 hours after the vaccine has been administered. If your dog shows any of the symptoms listed above, call your vet immediately or [contact your emergency veterinary clinic](#).

Preventing Dog Vaccine Reactions

Vaccines help to protect the long term health of your dog, and the risk of your dog having a serious reaction to a vaccine is very low.

That said, if your dog has had a previous reaction to a vaccine, it is important to inform your veterinarian. Your vet may advise you to skip a particular vaccination in future.

The risk of reactions to vaccinations increases somewhat when multiple vaccinations are given at one time. This can be particularly true in smaller dogs. To help reduce the risk of reactions, your vet may suggest getting your dog's shots over the course of several days rather than all at once.

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.*