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[www.nativeremedies.com/petalive](http://www.nativeremedies.com/petalive)**Vexing vaccinations: a tale of too much of a good thing - petcare**[Better Nutrition](#), [May, 2003](#) by [Ann N. Martin](#)

Is your veterinarian still recommending that you have your pet vaccinated on a yearly basis? If so, you might want to reconsider--especially given the latest information on the problems associated with over-vaccination. Research in recent years indicates that, basically, there's no scientific evidence to support the need for annual vaccinations. "Annual vaccinations, a practice started many years ago, lack scientific validity or verification," says veterinarian R. Schultz, PhD, a professor at the Veterinary College at the University of Wisconsin.

cure or cause?

When annual rabies shots became common in the 1950s, pet owners never questioned the vaccine's safety. It helped vanquish the disease, as well as distemper and parvovirus. Following on the heels of this success, veterinary medicine developed more and more vaccinations. However, after many years of administering annual shots, vets began to notice something ominous. A growing number of otherwise healthy cats and dogs were getting cancer and immune-related diseases.

Pet owners and veterinary researchers began to question whether these problems were vaccine-related. Cats, for example, were developing fibrosarcomas--a fatal form of cancerous tumor--at the site of the vaccine injection, usually between the shoulder blades. Dogs were also getting cancerous tumors at injection sites and succumbed to immune diseases. My dog, Sarge, previously had a caring owner who vaccinated for everything on a yearly basis without realizing the consequences. Sarge now has discoid lupus, an autoimmune disease with no cure.

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So what's the link between vaccinations and these diseases?

Vaccines are designed to stimulate the immune system, but they do so in a very unnatural way that can overwhelm the body's natural defenses. Donna Starita Mehan, DVM, a holistic veterinarian in Boring, Oregon, explains that as a result of over-vaccination, the body may overreact to normally harmless substances such as common viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites. This can result in allergies, skin problems and bladder or ear infections--or, in extreme cases, autoimmune diseases or cancer.

double dose?

Another problem with traditional pet vaccines is the dosage. Veterinarian Jean Dodd, DVM, of Santa Monica, California, notes that to ensure efficacy, manufacturers for years have made vaccine doses 10 times more potent than what is necessary to challenge the immune system.

One vaccine producer, Pfizer, tested its one-year rabies vaccine on live animals and discovered it lasted for at least three years. Pfizer sells the identical formula, packaged differently, in different states to satisfy different state vaccination requirements.

In addition, be aware that a Chihuahua will get the same amount of a vaccine dose as a Saint Bernard--a "one dose fits all" formula. For example, a small puppy and a large adult dog are both given 1 cc of a combination vaccine that might contain distemper, parainfluenza and parvo. And seldom, if ever, will your veterinarian lower the dosage. "In theory, your veterinarian could lose his license for not administering the full dose," says Martin Goldstein, DVM, of South Salem, New York. "Or, he might have to recall all of the pets to whom he gave a substandard dose and revaccinate them at full dosages."

changing attitudes

About five years ago, veterinary schools began to rethink the conventional wisdom of yearly vaccination protocols due to mounting evidence pointing to the connection between immune diseases, cancers and vaccinations. In January 1998, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recommended that cats and dogs be vaccinated only every three years. As of 2003, all 27 veterinary schools in the United States are in the process of changing their protocols for vaccinating dogs and cats.

Dodd has studied the pros and cons of yearly vaccinations and has written a number of papers about them. She recommends that only the first shots for puppies and kittens be a modified live virus (MLV). These vaccinations should be given as individual injections over the span of weeks or months.

Because first vaccines are with a more effective MLV, the vaccine will probably produce an immunity that is good for the life of the pet. For subsequent vaccinations, Dodd suggests "killed virus" vaccines, which aren't



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firmly entrenched

Even though many veterinarians and veterinary schools no longer recommend yearly vaccinations, not everyone has given up this annual assault. Why? In part, it's about money. Veterinarians receive a large percentage of their income from vaccinations.

The average single dose of any vaccine costs about 79 cents, not including the needle or syringe. Veterinarians charge from \$16 to \$20 to administer this dose in addition to an office visit fee.

"It's been estimated that veterinarians charge \$36 million a year for vaccinations that aren't necessary," says Spring, Texas-based veterinarian Bob Rogers, DVM. Rogers has filed a complaint with the Texas Attorney General against all licensed veterinarians in his state. He asserts that pets are receiving unnecessary vaccinations, and he has asked that legal action be taken to stop this practice. Such vaccinations are not only unnecessary, says Rogers, they can also cause pets an untold amount of harm.

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