

# Facts about FIV

## 1 What is FIV?

**Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) is one of the most common infectious disease in cats.**

FIV is contagious only to other cats.

It is not contagious to dogs, humans, or other non-feline species.

FIV will not survive for more than a few hours in most environments.

FIV is spread primarily through bite wounds from an infected cat. Casual casual such as sharing water bowls or mutual grooming, does not appear to be an efficient route of spreading the virus.

On rare occasions, an infected mother cat may transmit the infection to her kittens.

Knowing this, cats in households with stable social structures where housemates do not fight are at low risk to acquire the virus, however we recommend all FIV+ kitties be separated to eliminate all risks.

**FELINE  
IMMUNODEFICIENCY  
VIRUS**

## 2 Testing and Diagnosis

**ELISA** enzyme-linked testing is performed first as an initial screening for the virus, to detect the protein component of FIV.

If the ELISA test is positive, **PCR** polymerase chain reaction testing is performed to confirm the status.

The PCR test detects the virus in the genetic material, which may confirm the status.

Your veterinarian may recommend other testing for individual cases.

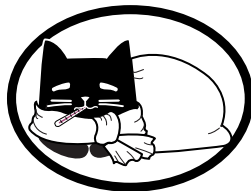
Almost Home Cat Rescue always performs the first-level ELISA testing and the second-level PCR test if the first is positive. There are no available vaccines to protect uninfected kitties from acquiring FIV.



## 3 Signs of Illness

Kitties that are FIV+ will be asymptomatic after initial infection, which may last for months to years. During this time, the virus replicates very slowly within the cells of the immune system and cats will not show any outward signs of illness. Infected cats may exhibit blood work abnormalities, such as low white blood cell levels or increased blood proteins. Most cats will remain in this stage and never progress to more severe disease. Some cats may enter a progressive immuno-compromised state during which secondary infections may occur. Illness related to FIV is not from the virus itself, but from these secondary infections or problems with the immune system. Illness severity can vary, so it is important to watch for any abnormal health signs. Some cats show mild symptoms, but many cats don't have any noticeable symptoms. If you see any of the below conditions, see your vet:

- Poor appetite
- Weakened Immune system
- Seizures or other neurological trouble
- Weight loss
- Inflammation of the gums
- Skin, eye, bladder, and respiratory infections
- Lethargy
- Behavioral changes



## 4 Living with FIV

Kitties infected with FIV may appear normal for years and recent studies suggest that cats with FIV commonly live average life spans, as long as they are not also infected with feline leukemia virus. While there are no treatments for the virus that will get rid of the infection, maintaining a clean house to protect them from secondary infections will help greatly to help them live with the virus. This is important to help them defend against daily contact with environmental bacteria, fungi, viruses, and protozoa. Offering a nutritionally balanced high-quality diet is also essential for FIV+ cats.

Kitties should visit their veterinarian for regular check-ups. Monitor weight, appetite, activity level, elimination habits, appearance of the mouth, eyes, and lymph nodes to help manage the virus. Some antiviral therapies are being studied as treatments for FIV.

Your veterinarian will advise on blood testing, vaccinations, parasite prevention, and nutritional supplements such as FELIMM which naturally encourage the detoxification of the lymphatic system, strengthen the immune system, and improve energy levels.

It is important to realize that cats with FIV can live normal, long and healthy lives!

