

My Cat is FeLV+

What is FeLV?

FeLV is also known as feline leukemia virus. It is one of the most transmissible diseases in felines. FeLV is transmitted between cats via close social contact. This includes mutual grooming, sharing food and water dishes, bite wounds, and the sharing of bodily fluids, including milk from a mother, according to the Veterinary Information Network (VIN).

According to Cornell University, 2-3% of all cats in the United States have FeLV, but infection rates have dropped in the last 25 years due to better vaccinations.

Symptoms of FeLV can include:

- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Poor coat condition
- Large lymph nodes
- Fever
- Pale or inflamed gums
- Chronic skin, bladder, or upper respiratory infections
- Persistent diarrhea
- Seizures



FeLV is diagnosed through a simple blood test. Cats are most susceptible to exposure as kittens, so it is suggested to retest your kitten during the first year of their life. There is a vaccine to help prevent FeLV, but there is no cure.

The median age of life after diagnosis is approximately 2.5 years (Cornell).

How to live with FeLV

Being so contagious, cats that are FeLV+ should be the only cat in your household, or only live with other FeLV+ cats. FeLV can only be transmitted to other cats, so humans and other animals are not at risk. FeLV+ cats should be kept indoors so they do not come into contact with other cats.

The most important thing to do is love your cat and follow the guidance provided by your veterinarian. You've taken a chance on a cat that deserves love no matter their diagnosis.