



## Living with FIV: Tips for Keeping Positive Cats Healthy

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[Feline immunodeficiency virus \(FIV\)](#) affects approximately 2–4% of domestic cats in the United States, according to the [Feline Health Center at Cornell University](#). Like the human immunodeficiency virus, FIV compromises a cat's ability to fight infection, and although there are ways to manage the illness, it is ultimately fatal. The only way to fully protect cats from FIV is to prevent exposure. The virus is transmitted primarily through deep bite wounds, so we urge owners to keep their cats indoors.

An FIV vaccine exists, but the effectiveness of the vaccine is poorly supported by current research, which is why many clinics do not use it. It may also cause cancer at the injection site. There is a small risk of sarcomas developing after this vaccine so it is not recommended for the vast majority of cats.

### ***Caring for Your FIV+ Cat***

Finding out your cat has tested positive for FIV can be heartbreaking, but FIV infection is not a death sentence. Ask your local veterinarian for more information and help in creating a management plan that will give your cat a chance to alternately love and ignore you for many years to come. Properly managing the disease with nutritional support, consistent veterinary care, and immediate treatment of secondary infections can help your cat stay healthy longer.

It is recommended to feed FIV+ cats a well-balanced diet and avoiding raw foods. Uncooked meat can contain parasites and potentially harmful microorganisms that a cat with a suppressed immune system may not be able to fight.

It has been stated that many veterinarians believe that the ideal diet for 'healthy' FIV-positive cats should be relatively high protein and low carbohydrate, but it is important to recognize that each individual cat will require a diet that fits his or her unique needs, which may change as the disease progresses. Your veterinarian is your best resource for nutritional advice and food recommendations.

FIV+ cats of any age should receive wellness exams at least twice each year. Since they are immunosuppressed, we need to make sure they do not contract other illnesses, and blood and urine screening should be done at these visits. Early intervention and aggressive treatment of secondary illnesses is crucial to your cat's survival.

To lower your FIV+ cat's risk of contracting other diseases and to prevent the spread of FIV to other cats, it is important to keep your cat indoors at all times. But infected cats don't have to live in isolation. Some veterinarians recommend an FIV+ cat live as the only cat, or with other FIV+ cats. Other veterinary professionals feel it is safe to have an FIV+ cat with an FIV- cat in the same household. As long as they get along well and don't fight, the risk to the uninfected cat is low.

***IMPORTANT NOTE: FIV cannot be transmitted to humans.***

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