

## Feline Corona Virus

"Feline corona virus in most cases is a mild virus that 99% of cats are capable of fighting. Symptoms are runny nose and discharge from the eyes. In some cats the disease turns into FIP which is always fatal."

Feline coronavirus (FCoV) is a virus that causes mild symptoms in most cats. In rare instances (1%) it can lead to a condition called feline infectious peritonitis (FIP). Not all cats with feline corona virus get FIP, but for those who do, it is a devastating condition and the leading infectious cause of cat death. FIP is almost always fatal. The virus works by infecting the white blood cells. The infection is spread from cat to cat who are in close contact.

The virus appears at least 2 weeks after infection. Most cats when exposed do not contract the disease. If your cat has a mild form of the virus they will exhibit symptoms such as runny nose or discharge from the eyes and then recover.

Even if your cat recovers they could still be a carrier that could possibly infect other cats. The virus can survive up to 7 weeks in dried up cat feces and is mostly seen in multicat households.

## Feline Infectious Peritonitis

There are two forms of feline infectious peritonitis. There is the acute form, known as "wet" or effusive FIP, and there is the chronic form, known as "dry" or non-effusive FIP. About 75% of all cases are acute, meaning they come on suddenly.

In acute feline infectious peritonitis, fluids accumulate in the body cavities (that's why it's called "wet" FIP). Primarily, these fluids accumulate in the abdomen and in the chest cavity, where they cause difficulty breathing by compressing the lungs.

In chronic feline infectious peritonitis, fluids are not a problem. Instead, lesions develop on organs. Neurological symptoms may result, such as seizures or paralysis. Kidney or liver problems may occur. Weight loss, depression, anemia, and fever are common.

While these sound like two very different diseases, they are not. The determining factor as to which form a cat will get is the strength of the cat's immune defense when faced with the virus. A cat with a strong immune system will probably get the "dry" form. A cat with a weaker immune system will get the "wet" form. A cat with a very strong immune system may not get FIP at all but become a carrier of the virus.

## Feline Corona Virus Diagnosis

Blood tests can determine whether a cat has been exposed to feline corona virus by checking for antibodies to the virus. However, the test cannot distinguish between feline corona virus and FIP. A diagnosis of FIP is made based on a cat's symptoms, x-rays, lab results, and evaluation of the fluid buildup.

## Treatment

There is no cure for feline corona virus. Once a cat has the virus, she will have it for life. It may or may not lead to feline infectious peritonitis.

There is no cure for feline infectious peritonitis, and the disease is almost always fatal. The only treatment is supportive care, which may consist of corticosteroids, antibiotics, good nutrition, etc. in order to keep the cat as comfortable as possible.

There is a vaccine for FIP, but its use is controversial. It will not help a cat that has been exposed to feline corona virus, and in fact if given to a cat that has been exposed to the virus, it may increase her risk of developing FIP. It is often not recommended for cats that live in low risk (households with one indoor cat) environments. Owners are advised to discuss the pros and cons of the vaccine with their veterinarian.