

FIV



What is FIV?

FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) is a viral disease that affects the immune system in cats. FIV is common, with about 14-29% of cats in Australia being FIV-positive. Infected cats can live long, normal lives and have a similar life expectancy and quality of life to cats without it.

How does it transmit?

FIV is difficult to transmit in a home with desexed cats, as the main source of infection is from deep bite wounds from aggressive fighting. In other rare instances, it can be passed down from a mother to her kittens (through the placenta or through her milk). In a [study of 138 desexed cats](#) who lived together (8 of which were positive for FIV), it shows 0 transmission of FIV despite years of living together.

FIV+ and FIV- cats can happily live together with an extremely low chance of it spreading. Transmission between desexed cats in a home is highly unlikely, and it may be as low as 1-2%*

Once a cat gets FIV, the cat will be infected for life and there is currently no cure. Only cats can get FIV and it cannot be transmitted to/from humans or other species.

What are the symptoms of FIV?

The affected cat may never develop symptoms in their life. They may however experience one or more of the following symptoms (which are due to the immune suppression caused by FIV rather than being caused by FIV itself, and these are also symptoms that could be caused by many other illnesses): Fever, weight loss, inflammation of mouth/gums, poor coat condition, diarrhoea, loss of appetite, swollen lymph nodes, other symptoms.

How is FIV diagnosed?

FIV can be diagnosed by a veterinarian taking a sample of the cats blood or saliva and testing it. A false-positive may occur if the cat has previously been vaccinated against FIV.

AWL NSW Kemp's Creek test every cat over 6 months for FIV and it is optional for branches. Kittens under about 6 months could return a false-positive result for FIV if tested due to the antibodies from their mother's milk interfering with the test. If a kitten under 6 months is tested and the result is positive, the kitten should be re-tested from 6 months of age.

How is FIV prevented?

As FIV is primarily spread from deep bite wounds from an infected cat, keeping a cat indoor-only will significantly reduce the chance of a cat getting infected. When introducing new cats, do a slow and proper introduction to reduce the chance of either cat biting.

Cats can be vaccinated against FIV. It involves 3 initial vaccinations 2-4 weeks apart then yearly boosters, in addition to the standard F3 vaccination.

Source: [*https://www.catchat.org/index.php/fiv](https://www.catchat.org/index.php/fiv)