Is Parvovirus Contagious?

Yes! Parvovirus is contagious. It is extremely resistant in the environment and can be around for many years. It is then ingested, licked or eaten, and can cause disease in puppies. It generally affects puppies less than six months old.

Can I or my kids get it?

No. Humans are not susceptible to canine parvovirus.

What about my other pets?

Yes your other pets can get parvo. Most adult dogs have either already been vaccinated against parvo or have been exposed and so are less likely to get it than younger animals. Cats are also susceptible depending on the strain of parvo. There are certain serotypes of parvovirus that can infect cats so it is best to treat all parvo cases as a possible risk to your cat.

How is it transmitted?

Parvovirus is transmitted by contact with either other animals that are infected or with ‘fomites’. A fomite is any object that has been contaminated by an infected individual which than can lead to passing on of the virus to the next animal, such things as bowls, toys, bedding etc. It can also be picked up from the environment.

How can I disinfect my home?

Parvovirus is very resistant to many disinfectants. Washing the affected areas with soap to remove any fecal material followed by disinfection of 4% bleach should eliminate the virus.

How accurate is the snap test?

If it comes back as positive, it is almost certain they have the disease. However, if it comes back negative, there is still a possibility they could have it and are shedding it.

When should I vaccinate?

You should vaccinate your puppy at 6-8 weeks, 10 and 12 weeks of age. Your puppy is most at risk from 8-10 weeks of age.

Why Can’t I Vaccinate Earlier?

If you vaccinate your pup too early the maternal antibody level is too high and it will prevent the pup from creating its’ own antibody response to the vaccine.

Is your puppy protected?


This brochure was created using knowledge gained from virology courses taught by Dr. Magda at Massey University and Dr. Vikram Misra at the University of Saskatchewan in addition to Tizard et al, Veterinary Immunology, 9th Ed (2013).
What is Parvovirus?
Parvovirus is a virus found in the family of viruses known as parvoviridae. It is one of the smallest viruses, but it is a deadly virus that affects mainly young puppies causing signs such as vomiting, bloody diarrhoea, diarrhoea, lack of eating, tiredness (lethargy)... among other signs. Without supportive therapy, they may go into shock and die. Even with treatment, there is still a chance the pup could not make it. If you have any concerns talk to your local veterinarian.

How can I prevent Parvovirus?
You can decrease the chance that your puppy will get sick by vaccinating them and getting your puppy vet checked. Avoiding public dog parks and public places until your puppy vaccinations have occurred is generally recommended. Also, socializing your puppy with dogs that are up to date on their vaccines.

My dog has diarrhoea. What else can it be?
It could be many different things. Your vet will come up with a list of differentials which may look something like this:
- foreign body
- coronavirus
- rotavirus
- distemper
- salmoneter
- e. coli
- campylobacter
- clostridium
- ingestion of non-food items

Basically, diarrhoea can have many different causes. Your vet will likely run a parvo snap test to help determine whether parvo is the cause.

The science behind when to vaccinate:
Antibodies obtained from colostrum interfere with the puppy’s ability to produce its own antibodies. As the levels of maternal antibodies decline in the puppy, their ability to make their own antibodies increases.

Adverse vaccine reactions?
Adverse vaccine reactions are usually something called a type I hypersensitivity (allergic reaction). They can be anywhere from a mild reaction with just itching at the site of injection to severe involving anaphylaxis and vomiting/diarrhoea.

How common?
Vaccine reactions are relatively rare, but they do occur. They have been reported to occur at a rate of around 38/10,000 in dogs (0.38%). This is a statistic for all vaccines combined, not just the parvo vaccine, and is really dependent on the genetics of the individual dog.

Why should you still vaccinate?
Unless your puppy has high risk of vaccine reaction due to genetics, you should still vaccinate. The risk of disease far outweighs the risk of adverse reactions, and if enough puppies are vaccinated the risk of the disease for a population as a whole is decreased. This is a concept known as population immunity.

The cost of vaccination vs. the cost of treatment:
The cost of vaccination against parvovirus will vary depending on where you live, but should be in the ballpark of around $50. However, if your dog gets parvo and requires hospitalization, you may be in for a bill of several thousand dollars depending on the severity of disease, not to mention the emotional cost if your puppy does not survive.