

What's So Risky About Puppy Shots?



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You know this, right?

For most dog owners, it's not news that yearly boosters – or any boosters really – are at best unnecessary and at worst harmful.

You know that reducing the number of vaccines is critical to your dog's health, but when it comes to puppy shots, we're still over-vaccinating. And we're doing it at a critical time in your dog's life.

Let me explain ...

Why Routine Puppy Shots Shouldn't Be Routine

As we know, puppies are given a series of several vaccinations, spaced two to four weeks apart.

This is pretty standard practice ... and we've come to believe that a series of puppy shots is necessary for them to be protected. But this simply isn't true.

It takes only one vaccine for a puppy to be protected.

So why are puppies vaccinated three or four times instead of just once?

Maternal Antibodies

When puppies are very young, they're protected from disease by drinking their mother's first milk, called **colostrum**. This rich milk contains antibodies against disease (called maternal antibodies), which the mother passes down to her puppies. The puppy's immune system isn't fully mature, and able to fully protect him, until your puppy is around six months of age, so the maternal antibodies provide something called passive immunity.

This might seem like a good idea, but here's the problem with those maternal antibodies ...

When a puppy with a reasonable amount of maternal antibodies is vaccinated, the maternal antibodies will essentially inactivate the vaccine, just as it would a real virus.

As good as those maternal antibodies are, they can't protect the puppy against the other toxins contained in vaccines such as the chemical adjuvants and preservatives which contain harmful chemicals including mercury, MSG, aluminum and formaldehyde.

The adjuvants are designed to stimulate an exaggerated immune response, to make sure that your puppy's body responds to the small amount of virus contained in the vaccine.

Unfortunately, this heightened [reaction](#) can also cause autoimmune disorders which are affecting an alarming number of dogs and can include:

- allergies
- cancer
- thyroid disease
- digestive diseases
- joint disease

... as well as a rather long laundry list of other common health issues.

More Is Better?

Vets and pet owners used to believe that 'more is better' when it came to vaccines.

But we now know there are very real dangers with every vaccine given ... and the more vaccines, the more likely something is to go wrong. So, when designing a puppy vaccination schedule, the goal is to catch the small window in time when the maternal antibodies are low enough that they won't block the vaccine, but the puppy is young enough that he isn't put in unnecessary danger from exposure to viruses in the environment.

Maternal antibodies weaken over time but the rate of weakening differs between different dogs and even different breeds. Especially when it comes [to parvovirus](#).

The maternal antibodies for parvo can last longer than other common puppyhood diseases – as long as 26 weeks in some dogs – and that presents a problem for our puppy shot schedule.

This lack of predictability is why puppies are vaccinated every two to four weeks until 16 weeks of age ...

... vets are trying to catch the window in time when the maternal antibodies are low enough for the vaccine to work. So they just keep vaccinating on a regular schedule until the puppy is 6 months old.

Now, if you're concerned about the risks of vaccination – and you should be – then this vaccine schedule really doesn't make much sense. Although nearly every puppy is vaccinated this way, the shots may be given too soon or continue after the puppy is already protected.

That might protect puppies from infectious disease but every unnecessary vaccine puts him at risk for allergies, cancer and other very common diseases.

Intelligent Vaccination

Noted veterinary immunologist Dr Ronald Schultz has addressed this issue and recommends a minimal vaccine program that includes one vaccination for parvo, distemper and adenovirus only, given at 16 weeks of age.

This isn't an arbitrary number – it's the earliest age at which the vaccine will have the greatest chance of protecting your puppy.

This is interesting ...

The vaccine manufacturer Pfizer performed a field study in 1996. Researchers Hoare, DeBouck and Wiseman assessed vaccinated puppies and split them into two groups.

Group A received a single vaccination at 12 weeks

Group B received a first vaccine between 8 to 10 weeks and a second shot at 12 weeks

When titers were measured (titers are a way to measure a dog's level of immunity), 100% of the puppies vaccinated once at 12 weeks were protected.

But only 94% of the puppies in Group B were protected ...

... despite receiving two vaccines as opposed to one.

It would appear that the first vaccine reduced the effectiveness the the second vaccine.

Now imagine the puppy who is vaccinated three or four times. By the time he reaches 12 or 16 weeks of age, he'll be **LESS LIKELY** to be protected than the puppy who was only vaccinated once at 12 weeks.

And don't forget, he's received more vaccines so not only is he less likely to be protected, he's at more risk for adverse reactions and the common chronic diseases like allergies, cancer and more.

Vanguard also tested the response to parvovirus in their combination vaccine.

They vaccinated puppies at 6 weeks, 9 weeks and 12 weeks of age and then measured their response to the vaccine by measuring their titers to parvovirus.

At 6 weeks, only 52% of the puppies were protected, meaning that half of the puppies vaccinated at 6 weeks of age would get all of the risk from the vaccine and none of the benefit because their maternal antibodies inactivated the vaccine. At 9 weeks, 88% of the puppies showed a response to the vaccine. At 12 weeks, 100% of the puppies were protected.

The Magic Number

It appears that 12 to 16 weeks would be the magic number where vaccines have a nearly 100% chance of working.

And by working, it means that your puppy should only need that one vaccine – for his entire life.

The results are even more amazing with distemper.

Dr Schultz designed a study to mimic an animal shelter environment. He gave unvaccinated, 12 week old puppies just one dose of distemper vaccine ... just four hours before the puppies were placed in a room with distemper-infected dogs. Yikes!

But that one vaccine protected every one of those puppies.

Although two and even three doses of vaccine were the original recommendations made in the AAHA Canine Vaccine Guideline back in 20013, the research shows that a series of puppy shots is completely unnecessary.

Puppies vaccinated once at 12 to 16 weeks of age with a high titer vaccine, according to research done by Dr Schultz, have a virtually 100% chance of being protected.

But aren't the puppies at risk until 12 weeks of age?

Yes it is. But ironically, there's even greater risk for puppies given a series of shots.

Not only do these puppies receive more vaccines, meaning they're more likely to suffer from vaccine-induced chronic disease, there's a little downside to vaccines your vet doesn't tell you about ...

... they suppress your puppy's immune system. For ten days.

So if you're vaccinating your puppy at 8 weeks, not only is it not likely to protect him and he'll need another at 12 and probably again at 16 weeks, but it suppresses his immune system, meaning he's **MORE AT RISK** for infectious disease.

So it's no wonder why data from the Virbac Disease Watchdog shows that 28% of vaccinated puppies still get parvovirus.

So does the series of puppy shots still make sense to you?

What You Can Do To Make Sure Your Puppy Is Protected

If you feel you must vaccinate your puppy but want to reduce the risk as much as possible, vaccinating once at 16 weeks is a safe and effective approach. In fact, this is how Dr Schultz says he vaccinated his own puppies.

If you're not comfortable with just one vaccine, here's what you can do to reduce the vaccine load a little bit.

Have your vet run a titer test three weeks after the vaccination. If there is circulating antibody (any amount will do), it means your puppy is protected and he will be protected for life. (Don't believe vaccines can protect for life? Check out [this article](#))

It's important to note that if you wait until 12 or 16 weeks of age to vaccinate your puppy, you should keep him away from areas where there's a lot of dog traffic ... just as you would a puppy getting a series of shots.

And ironically, one of the most dangerous places you can take your puppy is the vet's office!

If you must bring your puppy under 12 weeks to the vet, it's important to carry him in and out of the clinic, as this is one of the most likely places for him to pick up viruses. Your best bet is to get the first appointment of the day, when you know the floors and tables will be at their cleanest.

We don't like to think about it, but vaccination has the very real risk of creating chronic, debilitating disease.

Most vets and dog owners don't see the connection because it can take weeks, months or even years after vaccination for these diseases to develop.

Needlessly stressing your puppy's immune system with vaccinations every two to four weeks is no longer a safe option for puppies. Find a vet who agrees with me and who is aware of this research and you'll reduce the risk of both infectious and chronic debilitating disease in your puppy – now and in the future.