

FAMILY PET CLINIC OF REDONDO BEACH

ADVERSE INJECTION REACTIONS (VACCINES AND PROHEART) IN DOGS AND CATS

Immunization represents stimulation of the immune system, an inherently inflammatory process. It is typical for some joint or muscle soreness to occur after vaccination, for mild lethargy to be observed, or for a mild fever to be present for a day or two. These reactions are not serious and generally go unnoticed. Pets may eat, drink, and exercise normally after vaccination if they want to; it is the more serious allergic reactions that need to be distinguished from the above expected phenomena.

Allergic Reactions

Adverse reactions may include hives, facial swelling, red skin, an itchy face or body, malaise, or possibly nausea or vomiting. More serious and very rare complications include the risk of shock and sudden death. The time frame after vaccination can be immediate (within 30-60 minutes) or anytime in the next 48 hours.

What to do during the Reaction

If your pet is having a reaction more severe than just some general malaise or soreness, you should let your veterinarian know right away. If it is after hours, it is prudent to consult the local emergency clinic. Anti-inflammatory injections can be used to halt the inflammatory cascade before it gets dangerously out of hand. Be sure you know who to call in case of problems after your pet is vaccinated or receives a Proheart6 injection. Vomiting may be a sign of a serious reaction, or could actually just be motion sickness from the car ride. Medications such as antihistamines or corticosteroids can be used to treat and prevent allergic reactions. **We charge approximately \$25-\$35 for a doctor to medicate an adverse drug reaction.** We typically give injections of diphenhydramine (Benadryl) and dexamethasone (a corticosteroid).

Lumps that Develop at the Injection Sites

Vaccines include an infectious organism that's rendered harmless but is still capable of stimulating the immune system. In some instances the organism is live, but weakened in some way. In other instances, the organism is killed. Some vaccines are made from killed bacterial organisms rather than viral organisms, and other vaccines (such as for rattlesnake bites) are made against proteins and no infectious organism is involved. The larger the organism and the more complicated the proteins, the more local inflammation results after the injection, and this sometimes translates into a firm knot or bump at the injection site. These lumps are typically noted a few days to weeks following vaccination and generally resolve on their own. These are not allergic reactions but are inflammatory reactions caused by the immune stimulation. If a lump persists longer than three months from the time of vaccination or is larger than 2 cm in diameter any time after vaccination, then it should be removed and biopsied. This removal is particularly true for cats as they have the potential to develop injection site tumors.

When in doubt, it's always "ok" to pre-medicate your dog or cat with diphenhydramine (Benadryl) --- give 1 mg. per lb. by mouth at least 2 hours before your scheduled appointment.