

Dog's Vaccination Reaction Calls for Caution

A dog who reacts to vaccinations needs special care.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. Every time my dog has a vaccination, he has an allergic reaction that seems to get worse each time. Is being vaccinated after age 2 really that important?

A. Allergic reactions to vaccinations are fairly common. They can range from facial swelling to hives, to collapse and vomiting. Unfortunately, these reactions can get worse every time your dog is vaccinated because the immune system gets stronger each time and reacts accordingly.

The best way to avoid future allergic reactions is to minimize the amount and type of vaccination. As you mentioned, once your dog is 2 years old, she can probably go three years, or longer, between vaccinations. Apart from the core vaccines (DA2PPV and rabies), all other vaccinations are optional, and should not be given to a dog prone to allergic reactions.

When your dog does need to be vaccinated, your veterinarian should give an injection of Benadryl first to reduce the likelihood of a reaction. In addition, your dog should be observed in a veterinary hospital for two to six hours following any vaccination so that any reaction can be treated. If necessary, your veterinarian will be able to give additional injections that can help reduce the reaction's severity.