

Dog Reactions to Vaccines

A veterinarian explains what you should know about the unwanted side effects of vaccinations for dogs.

Leslie Sinclair, DVM

Q. Can vaccines make my dog sick?

Leslie Sinclair, DVM says: Yes, despite the enormous good they do, vaccines can have unwanted effects. Any dog can have an allergic reaction to a vaccine. The reaction usually occurs within a few minutes to hours after vaccination, and symptoms can range from vomiting and diarrhea to swelling around face and head (hives) to shock. Emergency treatment may be necessary to save the dogs life. Another condition that vaccination can trigger is autoimmune hemolytic anemia (AIHA). It occurs when, for any number of reasons, your dogs immune system turns on itself, and mistakenly begins to devour the red blood cells in her bloodstream. Vaccination is only one possible cause of AIHA, which can occur in dogs, humans, and other species. Most cases of AIHA respond successfully to medical treatment. Be sure to consult your veterinarian about other causes of AIHA. Vaccination is one of the most effective methods we have for protecting dogs, although rare adverse reactions do occur. Its important that you and your veterinarian carefully discuss which vaccines are truly necessary, and the benefits and drawbacks of vaccination.

[- Back to the Vaccines Area -](#)

[Return to Ask the Vet About Dogs](#)

Reprinted from Ask the Vet About Dogs, by Leslie Sinclair, DVM © 2003. Permission granted by BowTie Press.