**Feline panleukopenia**, also known as *feline distemper*, is a highly contagious viral disease. It infects and kills healthy cells in a cat’s bone marrow, intestinal tract, and fetus (if the cat is pregnant).

**Feline Panleukopenia Explained**

Feline panleukopenia is in the parvovirus group and has a very high mortality rate. Within 24 hours of contracting the virus, it’s already in a cat’s bloodstream. Within 48 hours, a cat’s body tissue is infected. **White blood cell** numbers begin to decline in as little as two to four days after being infected. Unvaccinated kittens and feral cats are the most common victims of this disease, but all cat breeds are susceptible. Other names for feline panleukopenia are *cat typhoid* and *cat fever*.

Feline panleukopenia is transmitted through contact with an infected cat’s saliva, urine, feces, fleas, blood, nasal discharge, food and water **dishes**, bedding, and cages. Pregnant cats can transmit the disease to the kittens while they are still in the uterus. If this occurs, kittens can be born with severe birth defects, including still births, brain damage, blindness, and muscle or nerve damage. **Feline panleukopenia** is fatal within the first five days of infection and most kittens show no signs they are ill.

**Symptoms of Feline Panleukopenia**

**Read more:** [Feline Panleukopenia](#)

A cat that has contracted feline panleukopenia will have gastrointestinal **symptoms** like blood in his stool, diarrhea, vomiting, and loss of appetite, which can lead to **dehydration**. Other signs of illness include anemia, fever, weakness, and nasal discharge. Other diseases, like feline leukemia and salmonellosis, mimic the symptoms of feline panleukopenia, but do not affect the white blood cells.

**Diagnosing Feline Distemper**

Diagnosing feline panleukopenia is quick and painless. A medical and exposure history will first be requested. Then a blood smear **CBC** will be completed by a cat’s veterinarian to be analyzed. A parvo snap test is sometimes done, but the test results are not as revealing for felines as they might be for other pets. If a cat’s test is positive for the disease, the white blood cell count will be low or nonexistent.

**Prevention**

The best way to prevent feline panleukopenia is to get a cat vaccinated. **Vaccines** are highly effective and are given to prepare the immune system to fight against a specific disease. The first vaccine for kittens should be at 8-10 weeks of age, with the second round given four weeks later. A third round is recommended at sixteen weeks of age. There are some vaccine **side** effects that include inflammation, mild swelling, and the risk of birth defects if a cat is pregnant.

If one has a kitten or a cat that’s infected with feline panleukopenia, there are a few things a pet owner can do to help keep the virus contained. First, clean and disinfect all the areas a cat has been using bleach or potassium peroxymonosulfate as this virus is very resilient. Wear protective gloves when caring for an infected cat. Dispose of all litter boxes, and food or water **bowls** safely.

**Feline panleukopenia** is a vicious and infectious disease to infect cats. Standard vaccinations and quality pet care has helped make this virus a worry of the past.