Feline Leukemia Virus

Is my cat at risk?
Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) is spread among cats through infected saliva and urine, and kittens can contract FeLV from their mothers. Cats that go outdoors are more likely to be infected because they can come in contact with other cats or urine from territorial marking. Keeping your cat indoors and away from other cats significantly reduces exposure to FeLV. If you do allow your cat outdoors, make sure it receives the FeLV vaccine, which boosts its immune system. Kittens receive a series of vaccinations and a yearly booster. Additional boosters are given as needed. It’s also important to test any new cats or kittens for FeLV infection before introducing them to your household. Cats that go outdoors or share a house with cats that go outdoors should be tested yearly.

What to look for
Veterinarians often suspect FeLV infection in sick cats with incomplete vaccination histories and in kittens that don’t gain weight and have recurrent infections. The signs often mimic other diseases, such as feline AIDS, FIV and may include a combination of the following symptoms:

• Weakness, lethargy or depression
• Decreased or no appetite
• Weight loss
• Fever
• Anemia
• Swollen lymph nodes
• Dental disease
• Vomiting or diarrhea
• Coughing or recurrent sneezing
• Ocular (eye) abnormalities
• Unhealthy coat
• Bad breath

Veterinary care
Some FeLV-positive cats eliminate the infection on their own. Some infected cats can harbor the virus for a long time and may become “carriers”—cats that spread the disease to other cats even though they appear healthy. That’s why it’s important to keep FeLV-positive pets isolated from other cats.

Early detection of health problems usually prevents unnecessary pain and expense—or worse. At Banfield, we try to help you maintain the quality of your cat’s life with an emphasis on preventative care, proper nutrition, regular physical exams and anything else your pet needs.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.