

Rabies Exposure Client Resource

Rabies is a fatal disease. Rabies cannot be treated once symptoms appear. It must be *prevented*

People get rabies from the bite or scratch of an infected animal through its saliva. It cannot be cured after symptoms appear. Any warm-blooded animal can spread rabies, but it happens most often in skunks, raccoons, foxes, bats, livestock, dogs and cats.

Important: Seek medical attention right away

Your health care provider is required by law to report the incident to the health unit for rabies investigation. You may be asked to complete a form called a Rabies and Animal Exposure Incident Report with information about the bite/exposure. The Health Unit will conduct a rabies investigation to help your health care provider determine if you need treatment to protect you from getting rabies.

Next: A rabies investigation

Over the next 10 days, a public health inspector (PHI) will use the information that you provided on the Rabies and Animal Exposure Incident Report to follow up with you, and the animal owner if applicable, to determine if you have been exposed to the Rabies Virus.

If the bite or scratch was from a pet (i.e. dog or cat), the PHI will contact the animal owner to make sure that the animal does not have rabies.

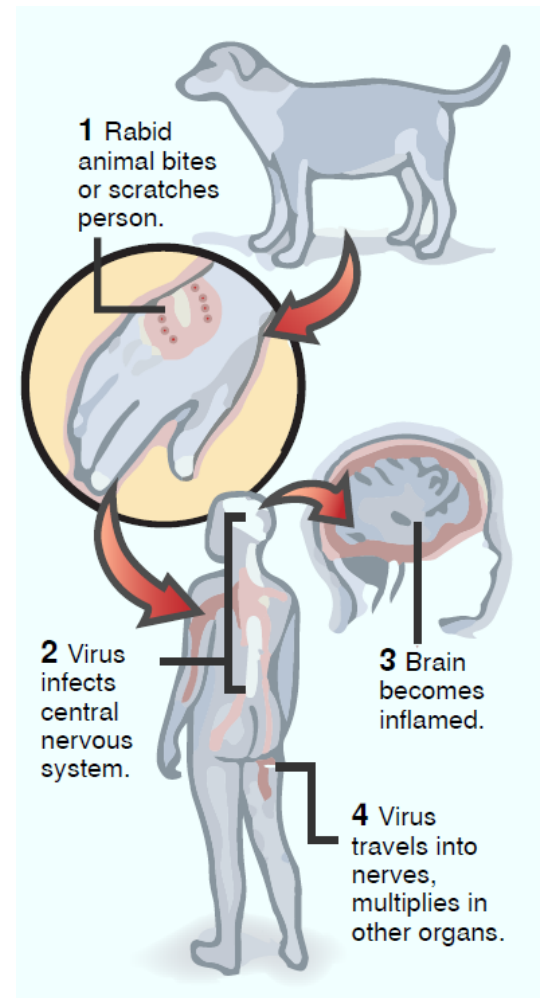
- This is usually done by *working with the animal owner* to keep the animal healthy and alive at the owner's home for at least 10 days from the date of the bite/scratch.
- Healthy animals are **not** taken away from owners.
- This observation period is usually very easy for all parties involved and timely cooperation with the health unit is essential.

Next: Protection

It is generally safe to wait until the PHI's rabies investigation is finished to determine if you require rabies treatment. In some cases, treatment needs to be earlier. If that's the case, your health care provider and the PHI will discuss this with you. They will give you medical recommendations in writing.

Rabies treatment will be recommended if the animal can't be found, or it tests positive for rabies. If your health care provider determines that rabies treatment is required, you will receive some needles over 2-4 weeks to protect you from getting rabies. **See other side.**

You should get a response from the health unit within 10 days from the date of the initial exposure with an outcome and recommendations from the investigation. If you don't, you should re-discuss your potential rabies exposure with your physician.



If you need protection against rabies

Protection against rabies is called **Rabies Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)**. Rabies PEP is given through a series of vaccinations, which you will need to complete according to the recommended schedule. Rabies PEP includes two different products given over 2-4 weeks.

Rabies Immune Globulin (RIG)

- Provides immediate short-term protection against the rabies virus and is administered on the first day of treatment (not necessarily the same day as exposure). The amount of RIG given depends on the client's weight.

Rabies Vaccine

- Helps a person develop their own natural antibodies against the virus. In most cases this will be administered on 4 separate dates over a 2 week period. However, individual schedules may vary from 2 doses (over 3 days) to 5 doses (over 28 days). The physician initiating the first dose will determine the right schedule for you.

It is important to follow the recommended vaccination schedule.

Use this guide to help you stay on track.

	What	Date/Location
Rabies Immune Globulin (RIG) ¹ + Rabies Vaccine	First Day of PEP "Day 0" (this is <i>not necessarily</i> the date of the exposure)	
Rabies Vaccine	Three days after the first dose "Day 3"	
Rabies Vaccine ¹	Seven days after the first dose "Day 7"	
Rabies Vaccine ¹	Fourteen days after the first dose "Day 14"	
Rabies Vaccine ¹	Twenty eight days after the first dose "Day 28"	

1. The physician will determine if RIG, Day 7, 14 and/or Day 28 are necessary

If you miss a scheduled dose, speak to your doctor as soon as possible.

For copies of the Rabies PEP fact sheets or to speak with a public health inspector, please visit smdhu.org or call 1-877-721-7520.