

VACCINE FACTS

Rabies Vaccine (RabAvert®, Imovax®)

Who should get this vaccine?

Anyone that has possibly come into contact with the rabies virus through a bite, scratch or other contact with a potentially infected animal should get this vaccine. The vaccine is publicly funded (free) when Public Health recommends it based on a risk assessment of the situation. Rabies vaccine may also be recommended for people at high risk of close contact with rabid animals or the rabies virus due to work or travel. Pre-exposure vaccination is not publicly funded. People would have to pay for the vaccine in these cases.

How well does this vaccine work?

When used in combination with rabies immune globulin (Rablg), Rabies vaccine is highly effective at preventing rabies in those who have been exposed. No cases of post-exposure rabies have occurred in Canada or the US when the vaccine and rabies immune globulin are given as the recommended. It is very important that people receive all of the doses needed and on the schedule that is recommended for them.

Is there an alternative to this vaccine?

At this time there are no other ways to prevent this disease.

Is this vaccine safe?

The risk of a serious reaction or side effect from this vaccine is much less than the risk of rabies. If you experience any side effect worse than what is listed below, please seek medical advice and notify the health unit.

Common side effects of Rabies vaccine:	Less common side effects of Rabies vaccine:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain where needle was given • Redness • Swelling • Hard lump • Itching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headache • Nausea • Abdominal pain • Muscle aches • Dizziness • Feeling unwell • Fever • Muscle pain • Joint pain

Who should not receive this vaccine?

There is no contraindication to receiving this vaccine, when it is indicated for post-exposure prophylaxis. If someone has an allergy to a vaccine component or has an allergic reaction to a dose of Rabies vaccine, they should receive the remaining doses in the series in their local hospital ER.

Other Considerations

When anyone has been bitten/scratched by an animal, it is also recommended to ensure their Tetanus shots are up to date. Those who have not had a Tetanus shot in the last 5-10 years should receive one. A tetanus shot can be given at the same visit when Rabies vaccine is given.

What is in this vaccine?

RabAvert®	Imovax® Rabies	Also found in...
Amphotericin B Chlortetracycline Neomycin	Neomycin	Antibiotics
Gelatin		Jello
Egg protein		Eggs
Human serum albumin	Human serum albumin	Other vaccines
	Phenol red	Other vaccines and medications

Rabies Immune Globulin (Imogam®, HyperRAB®S/D)

Who should get Rabies Immune Globulin (Rablg)?

Anyone that has possibly come into contact with the rabies virus through a bite, scratch or other contact with a potentially infected animal should get Rablg and Rabies vaccine as soon as possible following the exposure.

If someone has been previously immunized for Rabies, they may not need to receive Rablg. This will be determined during the risk assessment completed by Public Health following the exposure.

How well does Rablg work?

Rablg provides immediate protection to people, which protects them until their body mounts an immune response to the Rabies vaccine. This will provide them with long term protection. No post exposure rabies disease has occurred in Canada or the United States when the Rablg and the vaccine are given as recommended.

Is Rablg safe?

The risk of a serious reaction or side effects from Rablg is much less than the risk of rabies. If you experience any side effects worse than what is listed below, please seek medical advice and notify the health unit.

Common side effects of Rablg:	Less common side effects of Rablg:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local injection site painRednessHard bumpHeadacheLow grade fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Serious adverse events are rare following immunization

Who should not receive Rablg?

There are no contraindications to the use of Rablg when it is indicated for post-exposure prophylaxis. If someone has an allergy to a Rablg component, they should receive the Rablg in their local hospital emergency department.

Other Considerations

If Measles, Mumps & Rubella (MMR) vaccine, Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine or MMRV vaccine was given less than 14 days before a person receives Rablg, the vaccine should be repeated at least 4 months later. If a person is due to receive a dose of MMR/Var/MMRV vaccine following when they receive Rablg, they should wait at least 4 months to receive the vaccine. Rablg should never be delayed as it is critically important in protecting the person immediately following potential rabies exposures. The vaccine doses can always be repeated. Rablg is unlikely to interfere with other live vaccines (Herpes Zoster, Yellow Fever, Rotavirus or Live Attenuated Flu vaccine) so they can be administered as indicated and don't need to be repeated if received recently.

References:

- Canadian Immunization Guide. Part 1-Key Immunization Information. Table 1: Blood products, human immune globulin and timing of immunization. Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada; 2019
- Canadian Immunization Guide. Part 4-Active Vaccines. Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada; 2019.