

RABIES & ANIMAL BITE EXPOSURE

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Rabies?

Rabies is an acute, fatal disease that is transmitted to humans by exposure to rabid animals.

How is rabies transmitted?

The rabies virus is transmitted in the saliva of an infected animal through a bite that breaks the skin, or a lick or splash onto mucous membranes or skin that is scratched or otherwise not intact.

What animals can transmit rabies?

In Michigan, the wild animals most likely to harbor rabies are the bat, skunk, fox and raccoon. It is possible, but not as likely, for dogs, cats, cattle, horses, sheep, goats, swine, bobcats, coyotes, and ferrets to be rabid.

How do I know if an animal is rabid?

It's not easy! People tend to think that rabid animals always drool and foam at the mouth. However, most rabid animals only display these symptoms in the late stage of the disease, and sometimes not even then. Rabid animals may stagger, appear restless, aggressive, change their tone of bark or growl, or appear to be choking. Typically wild animals may act friendly. Animals that are normally active at night may become active during the day. Passive animals may become fierce or aggressive.

How do I know if I have been exposed to rabies virus?

Exposure is defined as either 1) bite exposure-any penetration of the skin by teeth, or 2) non-bite exposure-saliva of an infected animal coming in contact with abrasion, open wounds, or mucous membranes.

What should I do if I am exposed?

- Wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water.
- Get a medical evaluation immediately with your own doctor or at the emergency room.
- Your doctor will clean and evaluate the exposure area, and assess the need for anti-rabies treatment, a tetanus-diphtheria booster, and antibiotic treatment.

What is current anti-rabies treatment like?

- It consists of five injections of vaccine over a 28-day period, and an immediate injection of rabies immune globulin.
- If treatment is recommended by a physician, it should be started as soon as possible.

Do I need to report the animal bite or possible rabies exposure?

- Report possible rabies exposures to your local County Animal Control Authorities, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- If a possible exposure occurs after hours or on a weekend, report it to a local law enforcement agency or the your local County Sheriff's Department.

What do I do with an animal that has bitten or scratched a person?

Consider the type of animal:

- ◆ Captured wild animals should always be euthanized and tested for rabies immediately.
- ◆ A domestic cat, dog, or ferret that has documented, up-to-date rabies vaccinations shall be confined to the owner's home for 10 days IF NOT ILL.
- ◆ If the (vaccinated) animal has symptoms of rabies or develops symptoms during the 10 days, it must be euthanized immediately and tested for rabies.
- ◆ Mice, hamsters, gerbils and other rodents will NOT be tested, because rabies is so rare.
- ◆ An unvaccinated domestic animal should be confined for 10 days for observation. If it becomes ill, it must be euthanized and examined. If not, after confinement it should be vaccinated for rabies.
- ◆ A stray that appears ill should be euthanized promptly and examined for rabies.
- ◆ A stray that appears healthy may be confined for 4 days to await an owner's claim. If there is no claim, the animal may be euthanized and tested for rabies.



DICKINSON-IRON DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

www.didhd.org

***818 Pyle Drive
Kingsford, MI 49802
(906) 774 1868***

***601 Washington Avenue
Iron River, MI 49935
(906) 265 9913***