



What is rabies?

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus. Rabies is spread when an animal with rabies bites you, or saliva enters a wound on your skin or an opening on your body: eyes, mouth. Even if you've had rabies vaccine in the past, you need booster shots if you've been exposed to rabies. You cannot tell if an animal has rabies just by looking at it.

What should I do if I am bitten by an animal?

- ✓ Clean the wound right away with soap and water for 10 minutes.
- ✓ Seek prompt medical attention from a medical care provider or hospital emergency department.
- ✓ Report the bite to the local health department.
- ✓ If you are bitten by a wild animal, try to contain the animal while taking care to prevent additional bites and exposure to saliva.
- ✓ If you need to kill the animal, do not damage the head. The animal head will be sent to the State Lab for rabies testing.
- ✓ If the rabies test is positive or indeterminate (unknown), you need to be vaccinated as soon as possible.
- ✓ If the test is negative for rabies, you were not exposed to rabies at the time of the incident.
- ✓ If the animal is not available for testing, the decision to start rabies vaccination will be made by you and your medical provider.
- ✓ If you were bitten by a pet animal obtain information from the owner about the pet: including the owner's name, home number, description of the animal and vaccination status for rabies.
- ✓ A pet that has bitten a person needs to be watched by a veterinarian for 10 days. If the animal shows no sign of rabies after 10 days, the animal did not have rabies. You were not exposed. If the animal shows signs of rabies, additional testing on the animal will occur and you may need rabies shots.

Exposures to bats are worrisome because some people with very minor exposures to bats have contacted rabies. If there has been any possibility of physical contact with a bat, even without a known bite, the animal should be safely captured and held until the public health department or physician can be contacted.