

# RABIES

## What is Rabies?

Rabies is a disease caused by the Rabies virus, most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. It may take several weeks or even a few years for people to show symptoms after getting infected with Rabies, but usually people start to show signs of the disease 1 to 3 months after the virus infects them.

## Symptoms of Rabies

The first symptoms of Rabies may be very similar to those of the flu. These symptoms may last for days. There may also be discomfort or itching at the site of the bite.

Symptoms will progress into cerebral dysfunction, anxiety, confusion and agitation. Finally, the person may experience delirium, abnormal behavior, hallucinations and insomnia.

## Diagnosis & Treatment of Rabies

Treatment to prevent the Rabies virus from infecting your body is recommended if doctors think there's a chance you have been exposed to the virus.

Blood and tissue tests are used to diagnose Rabies in people who have early signs and symptoms of the infection. Treatment must occur before clinical signs of Rabies appear; the disease is nearly always fatal by this point.

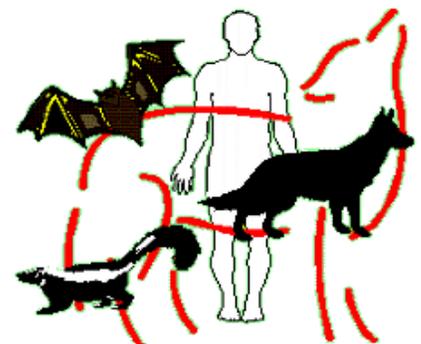
## How do People get Rabies?

Many kinds of animals can pass Rabies to people. Wild animals are much more likely to carry rabies, especially raccoons, skunks, bats, foxes and coyotes. However, dogs, cats, cattle or any warm-blooded animal can pass rabies to people. People usually get Rabies from the bite of an infected animal. Many animals, such as dogs, cats and horses are vaccinated against Rabies, but you should always wash any bite thoroughly, and check with your health care provider about what to do if any animal bites you .

## How Can I Help Prevent the Spread of Rabies?

Be a responsible pet owner:

- Keep vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- Do not let your pets come into contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately.
- Call your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood (they could be infected).
- Avoid direct contact with unfamiliar animals.
- Enjoy wild animals from afar.
- Never bring wild animals into your home.
- Do not try to nurse sick animals to health; call animal control or an animal rescue agency for assistance.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, even if they appear friendly.
- Prevent wild animals from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes and other buildings where they may come in contact with people and pets.



**For more information, please contact a Public Health Nurse at City-County Health Department at 454-6950 or visit [www.cchdmt.org](http://www.cchdmt.org) or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)**