



Keep Kids Safe from Rabies: Get the Facts

What is Rabies?

Rabies is a deadly virus that attacks the nervous system. The virus is secreted in saliva and is usually transmitted to people by a bite from an infected animal.

Symptoms of infection do not show up right away. Sometimes, it can take months. However, it is very important that you seek medical attention immediately if you receive a bite from an animal that is suspected of being infected with the rabies virus. Dogs, cats, and some wild animals can be infected with this virus and might still appear healthy.

If you wait to seek treatment until symptoms begin, it may be too late. Left untreated, the disease is nearly 100% fatal in people.

Most of the few, recent human cases acquired in this country, including a Missouri fatality in 2008, have resulted from exposure to bats.

Keeping Pets Safe and Rabies Free

If you love your pets, get them vaccinated against rabies! Although most animals that have rabies are wild animals, people are most commonly exposed to rabies by contact with their cat or dog.

Pets can come into contact with wild animals and

bring the risk back to you and your family. Child care providers can have discussions with children about how vaccinations keep their pets safe just like vaccinations keep kids safe! Taking pets in for rabies vaccinations protects them and protects you.

Child care providers and parents should teach children that they should ask before they pet someone's cat or dog.

Keep pets indoors or supervise them when outdoors to keep them safe. Making sure pets are supervised will ensure that they avoid wild or stray animals which may be unvaccinated or ill.

Stay Away from Wild Animals

Most of the time, rabies is found in wild animals in the United States. In Missouri, skunks and bats are the wild animals most likely to carry rabies.

Children should always avoid stray dogs and cats and all wild animals, especially those that are acting strangely. Animals, especially wild animals, that appear to be more friendly than usual may be sick.

Make sure that children know to stay away from dead animals because an animal that has recently died could still give people rabies. If an animal appears to be sick

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or dead, call Animal Control. Do not try to touch or move the animal on your own.

Never Touch Bats!

Most bats do not carry rabies, but some can carry this virus, and you cannot tell just by looking at a bat if it is infected or not. People usually know when they have been bitten by a bat, but sometimes a bat could bite a person and leave a wound that is so small that it goes unnoticed (for example, if the person is a very sound sleeper) or the wound is ignored.

Teach kids to avoid contact with bats; admire and appreciate their contributions to nature from a distance. Common scenarios include when a family member wakes up and finds a bat in the bedroom or an adult enters a room and finds a bat with a previously unattended child. Capture the bat in a can or other container with a lid without further human exposure, and contact local or state public health officials to arrange to have the bat tested for rabies. Do NOT release the bat. Testing the bat could prevent many people from having to undergo the costly anti-rabies series of shots.

If an Animal Bites You, Get Help!

Many animal bites that occur happen to children. If a

bite occurs, it should be washed gently but thoroughly with soap and water. Child care providers and parents should also seek medical attention immediately to see if the child needs antibiotics, a tetanus booster, or the anti-rabies series of shots.

Bites may occur even if you try to avoid the animal. If the animal has rabies, children or adults can receive a series of shots to keep them from getting the disease.

Rabies Prevention Resources

[CDC Kids and Rabies](#) website is where children can learn more about how rabies affects animals and humans and get tips on how to prevent rabies.

E-mail out electronic postcards ([e-cards 1 and 2](#)) about rabies to send out on [World Rabies Day \(September 28th\)](#) or any time of year.

“[Vaccinate Your Pets](#)” and “[Avoid Wild Animals](#)” are two free posters that you can order online and display in your facility or community. For more information, contact the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Office of Veterinary Public Health, at 573-526-4780.