



What should I do if my pet is bitten or scratched by an animal?

If your pet is bitten or scratched by an animal, avoid contact with the wound and **contact a veterinarian immediately**. Local and state laws will dictate what to do for your pets. Each jurisdiction has different requirements based on your pet's vaccination status, exposure, or potential exposure to rabies. Your local veterinarian is the most knowledgeable person that can provide the current rabies post-exposure requirements.

What are the symptoms of rabies in humans?

It is important to seek treatment from a medical provider immediately after any animal bite or scratch, even if no symptoms are present. Early symptoms of rabies may be similar to those of the flu and include weakness, discomfort, fever, or headache. Other symptoms include irritability and itching or pain at the exposure site. It is important to note that by the time any symptoms appear, rabies often cannot be successfully treated.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>

World Health Organization (WHO) <http://www.who.int/topics/rabies/en/>



<http://phc.amedd.army.mil>
1-800-222-9698
APHC Animal Health

This information brochure was written by Army Veterinary Services personnel and published by the Army Public Health Center to inform and educate Service members, beneficiaries, and retirees about Animal Health. Comments or questions regarding content can be directed to ARMY-VSPublications@mail.mil. Locate your local Veterinary Treatment Facility at <https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/animed/vtfo/Pages/Veterinary-Treatment-Facility-Interactive-Map.aspx>.



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Please **schedule** an **appointment** with your veterinarian to discuss any questions or concerns!



Zoonotic Disease

Rabies

what you should know



Always keep your pet's rabies vaccine up-to-date!

Your Veterinary Treatment Facility can help!



Army Public Health Center Animal Health

Bottom Line Up Front:

Rabies infection is almost always fatal in people.

Rabies is **ALWAYS** fatal in animals.

Rabies is preventable. Always keep your pet's rabies vaccine up-to-date according to state and local laws. Do not approach, feed, or handle wild or stray animals or any animal that you do not know.

It is not always possible to tell if an animal has rabies. Not all animals infected with rabies appear sick or display abnormal behavior.

If you are bitten or scratched by an animal, immediately wash the area with soap and water, and seek immediate medical attention.

If your pet is bitten or scratched by an animal, avoid contact with the wound and immediately contact a veterinarian.

What is rabies?

Rabies is a virus that affects the central nervous system of mammals, including people. It causes disease in the brain; if left untreated, it is almost always fatal in people and is always fatal in animals.

How do people and pets get rabies?

People and pets get rabies from contact with infected animals, generally through bites and scratches. It is also possible to get rabies if an area of broken skin or mucous membranes (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth) come into contact with a rabid animal's saliva or from contact with brain/nervous system tissue of infected animals. Cases of person-to-person rabies transmission are extremely rare. Seek advice from a medical provider if you have questions about a potential rabies exposure for you or your pet.

How do I prevent rabies?

Rabies is 100% preventable, and fortunately, treatment before symptoms develop is highly effective and life-saving in humans. Please consult with your family doctor if bitten for further information and assistance.

Always keep your pet's rabies vaccine up-to-date according to state and local laws. Also, report the presence of strange behaving animals, animals wandering or unattended in your neighborhood, or wildlife loose in the area to the proper authorities. Do not approach, feed, or handle wild or stray animals or any animal that you do not know.

How can I tell if an animal has rabies?

It is not always possible to tell if an animal has rabies. Not all animals infected with rabies appear sick or display abnormal behavior, such as foaming at the mouth or aggressive behavior. Contact a medical provider right away if you or your pet are bitten or scratched by any wild or stray animal or any animal you do not know.

While not all animals present the same symptoms of rabies, most will demonstrate one of two sets of symptoms:

1. Furious rabies. Symptoms include restlessness, wandering, howling, drooling, and attacks on other animals, people, or inanimate objects. Affected animals often swallow foreign objects such as sticks and stones. Wild animals frequently lose their fear of humans and may attack humans or animals they would normally avoid. Nocturnal animals (e.g., foxes, raccoons, skunks, bats) may be out during the day. Death usually occurs 4 to 8 days after symptoms appear.
2. Paralytic or "dumb" rabies. Symptoms include slow, progressive paralysis. The throat and jaw/facial muscles become paralyzed, and the animal is unable to swallow or bite. The animal will usually salivate profusely. Laryngeal paralysis can cause changes in vocalization, which may include abnormal bellowing in cattle or a hoarse howling in dogs. Biting is uncommon. Death usually occurs within 2 to 6 days as the result of respiratory failure.

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

If you are bitten or scratched by an animal, immediately wash the area with soap and water and report to the nearest medical provider. A medical provider will evaluate the injury for potential infections, including rabies, and will determine what treatment is necessary.

Bat exposure presents a special scenario. Due to their size, bites from bats often go unnoticed. Anytime a bat is found inside your home, whether or not a bite has occurred, seek medical advice immediately.

Contact a medical provider right away if you or your pet are bitten or scratched by any wild or stray animal or any animal you do not know.

