

# RABIES FACT SHEET

## What is rabies?

Rabies is a preventable viral infection spread through saliva and bites of infected animals. The virus infects the central nervous system causing brain disease and eventually death. If treatment is sought promptly, the onset of rabies can be prevented. However, if symptoms begin, it is 100% FATAL.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Initial symptoms are flu-like and can include general fatigue, discomfort, fever or headache.
- There may be discomfort, such as prickling or itching, at site of the bite.
- As the disease progresses, cerebral dysfunction, confusion, and agitation will turn into delirium, abnormal behavior, hallucinations, over salivation, and insomnia.
- **Initial symptoms may take a while to appear. They usually end after 2 to 10 days. Once clinical symptoms have set in, the disease is almost always fatal and treatment is only to help keep the person as comfortable as possible.**

## How can it be prevented?

- Vaccinate pets.
- Maintain control of pets to reduce exposure to wildlife.
- Leave all wildlife alone.
- Report stray or ill animals to animal control.

## How is it spread?

- Through direct contact with saliva from an infected animal, usually from a bite

Rabies can occur in any mammal, but raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes, and bats are often transmitters of the disease. **Contact with infected bats is the leading cause of rabies deaths in people in the United States.**

Dogs can also transmit rabies, but this is rare in the US because of widespread vaccination.

## How is it treated?

- A rabies vaccine is available and is the only source of treatment.
- If given promptly and before symptoms appear, the vaccine is effective in curing rabies and preventing the onset of symptoms.
- Immediate wound cleansing is important. It has been shown to decrease the risk of bacterial infection and reduce the likelihood of rabies.

More information: <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies>

This FACT SHEET is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider. For more information call your healthcare provider.

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