

# What To Do If You Are Exposed To Rabies

Exposure to the rabies virus is not fatal when treated in time. Modern treatment consists of a series of five shots in the arms over a period of weeks and a dose of anti-rabies globulin at the start of the treatment. It's relatively painless — seek treatment as soon as possible.

If you are exposed, wash the wound or affected area for ten minutes with soap and water; if the eye, nose or mouth is affected, flush with water for several minutes. Then, contact your physician for an evaluation.

Don't wait for symptoms to develop — by then it is too late to treat the disease and death will result.

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# For More Information

For more information on animal borne disease and prevention please call ...

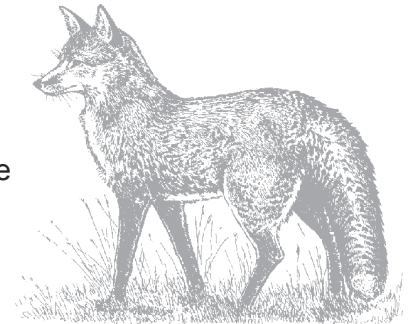
Jefferson County Public Health  
Zoonosis Program  
at 303-271-5730 or  
303-271-5700  
or visit JCPH at  
[www.jeffco.us/health](http://www.jeffco.us/health)

Colorado Department of Health and  
Environment  
[www.cdphe.state.co.us](http://www.cdphe.state.co.us)

Centers for Disease Control and  
Prevention (CDC)  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)



Knowing some basic facts about rabies and wildlife, will enable you and your family to continue to enjoy Colorado's outdoors without undue worry.



Jefferson County Public Health  
Environmental Health Services  
303-271-5700  
[www.jeffco.us/health](http://www.jeffco.us/health)

## What is Rabies?

Rabies is an acute viral disease that attacks the central nervous system. It is a disease passed from animal to animal by bites. Humans can get the rabies disease as well and, if untreated, it is almost always fatal.

Rabies is found most often in skunks, raccoons and other carnivores, as well as bats, woodchucks and foxes. Rabid animals are not always easy to identify. Contrary to what you may think, not all rabid animals foam and drool at the mouth. Animals may stagger, appear restless, be aggressive, appear very friendly, exhibit a difference in their barks or howls, seem to be choking — or they may show no signs of the disease at all.



## How Humans Get Rabies

Rabies is generally transmitted from an infected wild or domestic animal by:

- a bite;
- a lick to open wounds or cuts; or
- nerve tissue or saliva introduced into cuts or the mucous membranes of the nose, eyes or mouth.

***If you think you have been exposed, seek medical advice immediately!*** To save an infected person's life, treatment must begin between the exposure and the start of symptoms — known as the incubation period.

## Protect Yourself

Since the advent of mandatory pet immunization for rabies (effective since 1993 cats must be immunized, too), the disease has been found primarily in wildlife populations. However, now that you understand how the disease is transmitted, you can easily see how your unimmunized pets could expose you to the virus. Obey all local leash laws. If your dog or cat is involved in a fight it could come home with disease-bearing saliva on its fur, you need to be prepared. Keep a pair of latex or rubber gloves nearby and use them as you examine and confine your pet. Discuss further action with your vet.

## ***PRECAUTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF EXPOSURE:***

- **Vaccinate your pets** — vaccine is available for dogs, cats, ferrets, cattle, horses and sheep.
- **Stay away from stray animals.**
- **Avoid contact with all wildlife** — even innocent appearing baby raccoons can be rabies positive.
- **Discourage wild animals from dining around your home** — do not leave pet food outdoors and secure garbage can lids.
- **Teach your children to stay away from wild animals and pets other than their own.** Teach them to tell you about any animal that has scratched or bitten them.
- **Don't touch dead animals** — if it is absolutely necessary, wear rubber or latex gloves.
- **Let your doctor determine whether an exposure to rabies has occurred.** Do not try to make that determination yourself.
- **Know that there are safe and effective vaccines for persons exposed to rabies.**
- **Know what to do if you are exposed to rabies.**