

Rabies Fact Sheet

Background

What is rabies?

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system and is found in the brain, spinal cord, and saliva of an infected animal. Any unvaccinated human or animal can get rabies if exposed. Rabies is fatal, but treatments can stop the risk of infection.

How is rabies spread?

Rabies is spread through an infected animal biting another animal or human. If an infected animal's saliva touched an open wound, eyes, or mouth, a doctor should be notified.

Some animals that can spread rabies in PA include:

- Raccoons
- Bats
- Skunks
- Foxes
- Groundhogs
- Feral or stray cats



Preventing Rabies

- Make sure your pet has a current rabies vaccine
- Don't feed, pet, or adopt wild or stray animals.
- Avoid attracting wild animals to your home - don't feed your animals outside.
- Avoid contact with wild or stray animals
- If you do feed stray cats, get them vaccinated.

What should I do if an animal bites me?

1. Wash the bite immediately with soap and warm water.
2. Quickly talk to your doctor for next steps.
3. Contact the Allegheny County Health Department for guidance and get the owner's contact information if possible.

What should I do if I have a bat in my house?

Bat bites can be small and might go unnoticed.

- Call the Allegheny County Health Department to discuss having the bat tested for rabies.
- If a bat is found in your home and you don't know if you were bitten, close all windows and doors to keep the bat in a separate room.
- Call animal control or PA Game Commission to remove the bat.
- If you can't reach a licensed professional to catch the bat, put on leather gloves and slowly approach the bat when it lands. Place a see-through container over the bat and slide a lid under the container to trap the bat inside. Tape the lid closed

Contacts and More Information

ACHD Hours: Monday - Friday 8am to 4pm



ACHD: 412-687-2243



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This fact sheet is a general review of rabies. Please contact your doctor for specific health information.

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