

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE RABIES VIRUS IN HUMANS

Rabies is a deadly virus that attacks the nervous system — but with basic knowledge and precautions, you can help protect yourself from occupational exposure.



THE RISK

Veterinarians, veterinary staff and veterinary students are at increased risk of exposure to rabies.¹

Rabies is a deadly but preventable disease caused by a virus that is transmitted to humans from infected animals, usually through a bite or scratch.²



THE SPREAD

The rabies virus attacks the central nervous system and is almost always fatal once a person starts to have symptoms.¹

Onset of symptoms and timing may vary depending on the rabies virus strain and where on the body the exposure occurred.³



TREATMENT

Untreated rabies is almost always fatal,² but 100% vaccine-preventable.

If you suspect you've been exposed, seek immediate medical attention.

Wash all wounds with soap and water. If necessary, your doctor may prescribe post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), including a course of rabies vaccine and special antibodies called human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) if you have not previously received rabies immunization.^{4,5}

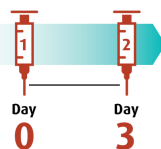


PREVENTION

Receiving rabies vaccination before an exposure can help to protect against unrecognized occupational exposures. Rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) does not eliminate the need for additional medical care after exposure, but simplifies treatment by reducing the number of required post-exposure vaccine doses (2 doses instead of 4-5 doses) and eliminating the need for HRIG. Additionally, PrEP will prime the immune system so treatment after exposure can be effective more quickly.^{6,7}



Potential Exposure



References

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Visit your state health department website for up-to-date rabies information and reporting requirements

<https://www.usa.gov/state-health>



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