



## **Kids and Rabies**

### **How does somebody get rabies?**

**Rabies is spread through saliva, the wet stuff in your mouth. It's not spread by blood, urine, or feces. If an animal has rabies and bites you - or licks its paw before it scratches you - then you could get rabies, too.**

**You can't get rabies just by petting an animal with rabies.**

**If you're bitten or scratched by an animal with rabies, the good news is that there are shots you can take that can keep you from getting the disease!**

### **What happens if we get rabies?**

**It can take one month, two months, or even longer for you to know something is wrong. The rabies virus attaches to nerve cells, working its way through the nervous system and eventually the virus makes its way to the brain.**

### **What should I do if I'm bitten by an animal?**

**Tell an adult right away! Have them wash the wound with soap and water for at least five minutes. Then see a doctor as soon as possible so the doctor can decide if you need more medical attention.**

**Have an adult contact your local animal control officer. If the animal that bit you is a pet like a dog, cat, or ferret, the animal may be watched for signs of rabies for 10 days. If it's a wild animal, the animal control officer will try to catch it so it can be tested for rabies.**

## What wild animals cause the most problems?

**In the United States, more raccoons have rabies than other wild animals, but it is bites from bats that cause the most rabies in people.**

**The problem is that bat bites can be so small you might not think they are very serious and tell anyone about them. If you discover a bat in your house, especially in the room where you're sleeping, you should act as if you were bitten and tell an adult as soon as you can. If an adult can trap the bat, then it can be tested so you will know if it had rabies.**

## What's the treatment?

**You can get anti-rabies shots right away. There are five of them that will be given over 14 days. Two shots are given the first day; one shot goes near where you were bitten and the second in the arm. The rest of the shots go in your arm.**

**The shots help your body make "antibodies". An antibody is a special molecule that will attack the virus and make it harder for it to enter a nerve cell. If your body makes enough antibodies, the virus will die.**



## What does a virus do?

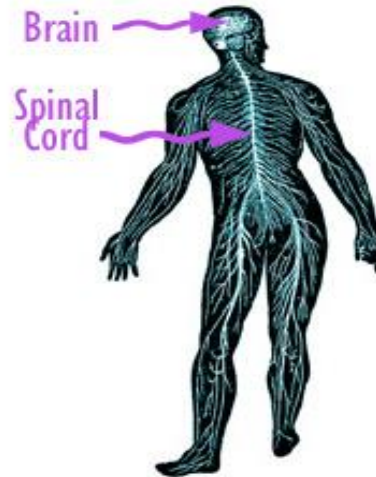
**Rabies is caused by a virus. A virus is a very tiny germ. You can only see that germ if you have a special microscope.**

## How does the rabies virus make someone sick?

**The rabies virus wants to make its home in a nerve cell, the smallest part of our central nervous system. The central**

**nervous system is made up of our brain and spinal cord and all the other parts of our bodies that control everything we do from breathing to walking.**

**When there is a bite from an animal with rabies, the virus attaches itself to a healthy nerve cell. Then the virus multiplies, making a lot more viruses like it. Those viruses move on and attach to other nerve cells until eventually they get to the brain. Rabies can be a fatal disease, so immediate**



**attention is very important.**

### **Can bats give you rabies?**

**Yes, a bat can give you rabies.**

**Bats are mammals - warm-blooded animals with fur - so they can get rabies. The only way they can give YOU rabies is if you are bitten by one.**

**Most bats don't have rabies, but you can't tell just by looking. If you see a bat, the best thing to do is to leave it alone. Or if you wake up in a room with a bat, tell your parents or an adult.**

**Bats only come out when the sun is down. If you see a bat that can't fly, or see a bat during the day, there might be something wrong. The bat maybe sick and you should be sure to stay away.**

**Even after being careful, if you still get bitten, wash the bite really well with soap and water. Tell an adult and go right away to a doctor. If an adult can safely catch the bat, contact your local health department or a trapper so the bat can be sent for testing to see if it has rabies. If the bat doesn't have rabies, then you're all clear.**

**If no one can catch the bat, or if the tests say the bat has rabies, your local hospital emergency room will give you a series of shots to make sure YOU don't get rabies. But don't worry; they don't hurt any worse than a regular shot!**

## **Animals & Rabies**

### **How do you know if an animal has rabies?**

**You can't tell if an animal has rabies by just looking at it. A clue though is if the animal is acting strangely.**

**Some animals may act mad when they have rabies. They will be hostile and may try to bite you or other animals. In movies, animals with rabies look like they are foaming at the mouth. What's really happening is that the rabies makes them have more saliva and that makes them drool. Other animals may act timid or shy when they have rabies. This is the most common kind. A wild animal might move slowly or act tame. You might be able to easily get close to it. Since that's not the way wild animals usually act, you should remember that something could be wrong.**

**The only way doctors can know for sure if an animal or a person has rabies is to do a laboratory tests.**

**The best thing to do is to never feed or approach a wild animal. Be careful of pets that you do not know. If you see a stray dog or cat, don't pet it. And if any animal is acting strangely, call your local animal control officer for help.**

## Prevention

### How do I keep my pet from getting rabies?

**The best way is to make sure your pet gets its rabies shot. Then be sure they wear their rabies tags and an identification tag with your name and telephone number on their collar.**

**You want to keep your dog away from wildlife so he won't be bitten by an animal with rabies. Always walk your dog on a leash so he or she can't run loose. Dogs should be in a fenced**



**yard if they're not on a leash.**

**Keep cats inside. Cats that are allowed to roam free outside are exposed to wildlife that could be carrying rabies.**

**Call animal control to take wild or stray animals away, especially if you see one acting strangely.**

**If an animal bites your pet, handle your pet carefully so you don't get bitten. Take them to your veterinarian so they can get a rabies booster vaccination. That will help them fight off the disease.**

**Get your pets spayed or neutered. They'll be less likely to leave home and become strays.**

## How do I keep me from getting rabies?

**Never touch unfamiliar or wild animals.**

**Avoid direct contact with stray animals. Stray cats and dogs may not have been vaccinated against rabies.**

**Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home.**

**Don't try to nurse sick wild animals back to health. It's great that you want to rescue a sick animal, but call an animal control person or an animal rescue group so they can take care of everything safely.**

**Make sure your trash cans are closed up tight and don't leave pet food out. You don't want to be attracting wild animals near your home.**

