

~ RABIES REMINDERS ~

**If you believe you may have been exposed, please contact - - -**  
**MA DPH, Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800 (avail. 24 hrs)**  
**or your healthcare provider or the Natick Board of Health at 508-647-6460.**

Rabies is a serious viral disease that can be spread through the saliva of an infected animal by a bite, scratch or if the saliva gets into a person's eyes, nose or mouth. Rabies is 100% preventable if an exposed person is treated early. However, it is fatal if treatment is not initiated in a timely manner. Almost all of the human cases of rabies acquired in the United States in the last 30 years have been due to a bat strain of the virus.

The teeth and claws of bats are so small that a bite or scratch may leave only a very small mark and the wound may not bleed or hurt. This means that under certain conditions, a person may not realize that an exposure has occurred. These conditions include: a sleeping person awaking to find a bat in the room; or an adult witnessing a bat in the room with a previously unattended child, mentally disabled person, or intoxicated person.

**How can I keep myself and others from getting rabies?**

- Teach children to never approach animals they don't know – even if they appear friendly.
- Report any animal that behaves oddly to your local animal control official.
- Enjoy wild animals from a distance. Do not keep wild animals as pets. This is against the law in Massachusetts.
- Make sure your pets are vaccinated against rabies. By law, all dogs, cats and ferrets must be regularly vaccinated against rabies.
- Don't leave food or water for your pets outside. Even empty bowls will attract wild and stray animals.
- Do not let pets roam freely. Keep them in a fenced yard or on a leash.
- Keep your garbage securely covered. Open garbage will attract wild or stray animals.
- Keep your chimney capped and repair holes in attics, cellars, and porches to help keep wild animals like bats and raccoons out of your home.

**What you should do if you think you've been exposed to rabies:**

If you are bitten or scratched by an animal:

- Wash the wound with soap and water right away for ten minutes.
- Call your doctor or local board of health. They can help you determine if you need to be treated for rabies exposure.
- If you were exposed to a wild animal, contact your local board of health - they may be able to identify resources to help catch the animal that scratched or bit you.
- If you were bitten or scratched by a cat, dog, ferret or cow, contact the local Animal Inspector who will monitor the animal and watch for any symptoms for 10 days. If they stay healthy, they did not expose you to rabies.

**What you should do if you think your pet has been exposed to rabies:**

If your pet is bitten or scratched by another animal:

- Try to find out what type of animal bit or scratched your pet but DO NOT touch the attacking animal.
- Use gloves and a hose to wash your pet's wounds. Do not touch your pet with your bare hands. There may be saliva from the rabid animal still on your pet, even if you don't see a bite or wound.
- Call your veterinarian to help you determine if the animal needs medical attention.
- If your pet was exposed to a wild animal, contact your local Animal Inspector – they may be able to identify resources to help catch the animal that scratched or bit your pet.
- If your pet was bitten or scratched by a cat, dog, ferret or cow, contact the local Animal Inspector who will monitor the animal and watch for any symptoms for 10 days. If they stay healthy, they did not expose your pet to rabies.
- In some cases, it may be necessary to confine your animal and watch it to see if it develops signs of rabies. Your local animal inspector can help you determine if this is necessary.

For more information on rabies prevention, contact the MDPH Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800 or visit the MDPH website at [www.mass.gov/dph/rabies](http://www.mass.gov/dph/rabies)