

# Rabies

## What is Rabies?

Rabies is a viral disease that affects the central nervous system (the brain). It can infect mammals, including humans, domestic animals, and wildlife.

## How is Rabies transmitted?

Rabies is transmitted primarily through the bite of an infected animal. Direct contact with saliva is required.

## What are the symptoms of Rabies?

The early symptoms in humans include apprehension, headache, fever, malaise, and sensory changes (often at the site of the animal bite). As the virus spreads through the central nervous system the symptoms progress to insomnia, slight or partial paralysis, hallucinations, hypersalivation, difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia (fear of water).

## Is Rabies a serious disease?

Rabies is a very serious disease. Once an infected person begins to show signs of rabies, the disease is usually fatal.

## Is there a treatment for Rabies?

If the infection is caught very early--before clinical signs appear--the disease can be treated. Humans who have been exposed receive two types of treatment. The first provides immunoglobulin injected directly into the bite wound and provides rapid protection. The second vaccine is a series of five injections that stimulate the person's own immune system to fight the infection.

## Is there Rabies in Oregon?

Yes, there are infected animals in Oregon. Bats and are the most common reservoir for the rabies virus. A few cases are reported in foxes each year in Oregon.

## How do I know if an animal is infected?

The only way to know for sure if an animal is infected is to test brain tissue for the presence of the virus. Animals usually show abnormal behavior when infected with rabies. Wild animals may act tame. Pets may have changes in behavior, salivate excessively, have trouble walking, or bite unprovoked.

## What should I do if exposed?

If you are bitten by a suspected rabid animal, immediately and thoroughly wash the wound with soap and water and contact your health care provider. If the animal is available, it should be tested for rabies. If the animal is not available for testing, your health care provider can contact the Oregon Health Authority for recommendations.

## What can I do to prevent Rabies?

You can prevent rabies by keeping your pets up-to-date on vaccinations and by minimizing contact with wild animals. Children should be taught to stay away from strange animals and should not be allowed to play with wild animals. Do not keep wild animals as pets. This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician or veterinarian for specific information related to you or your animals.

For more information go to:

- **Oregon Public Health Department:** <http://public.health.oregon.gov>
- **Centers for Disease Control** [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- **National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians** [www.nasphv.org](http://www.nasphv.org)