



## RABIES INFORMATION

Rabies is a viral disease that infects the central nervous system. If a person does not receive the appropriate medical care after a potential rabies exposure, **infection with the virus is almost always fatal.**

In Washington state, bats are the only known mammal to carry rabies. Rabid bats have been found in almost every county in the state. The rabies virus can be transmitted from bats to any warm-blooded mammal, including raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes and humans.

University personnel working with bats and/or who may have contact with other wild, warm-blooded mammals must take precautions to prevent and respond to a potential rabies infection.

### 1. **Pre-exposure rabies vaccination:**

- a. All University personnel working with the bats must be vaccinated prophylactically with the rabies vaccine before they can work with bats.
  - i. Rabies titer checks are required every 2 years for persons working in an area where there is a possible risk for rabies exposure.
  - ii. The vaccine is provided at no cost to personnel (department/unit provides worktag number).
  - iii. The vaccine and titer checks are administered by the [UW Employee Health Center](#).
- b. Rabies pre-exposure vaccination is recommended for personnel who may have contact with warm-blooded mammals in the wild or personnel conducting field work in remote locations with populations of animals where rabies is endemic (e.g., dogs). Contact the [UW Employee Health Center](#) for assistance.
- c. A complete description of vaccination recommendations by risk category is available from the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/prevention/pre-exposure_vaccinations.html) ([https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/prevention/pre-exposure\\_vaccinations.html](https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/prevention/pre-exposure_vaccinations.html)).

### 2. **Post-exposure procedure:** Perform first aid immediately, then get follow-up care as soon as possible after a potential rabies exposure.

- a. Wash the site/possible site of an animal bite thoroughly for 15 minutes with warm water and sudsing soap; if saliva comes in contact with mucous membranes (eyes nose mouth) flush with water for 15 minutes; then
- b. Contact your healthcare provider or nearby emergency department. The healthcare provider or treating provider (in emergency dept.) needs to



contact the WA [local health department](#) to report the potential for rabies exposure, determine the need for treatment, and to decide whether or not to test the animal for rabies. Refer to the resource Washington State Department of Health [Safely Capturing Bats for Rabies Testing](#).

Read more information about the rabies virus in FAQs below. Contact the [UW Employee Health Center](#) at [emphlth@uw.edu](mailto:emphlth@uw.edu) or 206-685-1026 with questions or concerns.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following information is provided by the [Washington State Department of Health](#).

### How is rabies spread?

The rabies virus is found in the saliva and brain tissue of a mammal infected with rabies. It is usually spread to people by animal bites. Rabies could be spread if the virus comes into contact with mucous membranes (eye, nose, and respiratory tract), open cuts, or wounds. Other animal contact, such as petting a mammal infected with rabies or contact with its blood, urine, or feces does not result in infection. Person-to-person transmission of rabies has occurred only through tissue transplantation.

### What are the symptoms?

Early symptoms include headache, fever, and sometimes pain at the site of the exposure (bite). The disease rapidly progresses into a severe nervous system (neurologic) illness. Symptoms may include agitation, confusion, paralysis, and difficulty swallowing. Most patients die within a few days or weeks of onset of symptoms.

### How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms normally appear two to eight weeks after exposure, but this period may vary up to months.

### What mammals carry rabies?

In the United States, rabies virus is adapted to various animal species which have different versions of the virus. Every state, except Hawaii, has bats with rabies (bat rabies variant). Some states have other animals with rabies, such as raccoons, skunks, or foxes. In Washington, bats are the only known mammal to carry rabies. While rabid raccoons, skunks, foxes, or coyotes have not been identified recently in Washington, the virus can be transmitted from bats to these mammals.

Between 3-10% of bats submitted for testing are found to be rabid. Bats tested for rabies are more likely to test positive for rabies because they tend to be sick or to come into contact with a person or other animal. Less than 1% of bats in the wild are infected with rabies. Rabid bats have been found in almost every county in Washington. Visit the [Rabies Activity webpage](#) to learn more about rabid animals identified in the state.



## RESOURCES

1. [UW Employee Health Center](http://www.ehs.washington.edu/workplace/uw-employee-health-center): www.ehs.washington.edu/workplace/uw-employee-health-center
2. Washington State Department of Health [Rabies Frequently Asked Questions](http://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/illness-and-disease-z/rabies-0): doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/illness-and-disease-z/rabies-0
3. Washington state [local health departments](http://doh.wa.gov/about-us/washingtons-public-health-system/washington-state-local-health-jurisdictions): doh.wa.gov/about-us/washingtons-public-health-system/washington-state-local-health-jurisdictions
4. Washington State Department of Health [Safely Capturing Bats for Rabies Testing](http://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/Pubs/420-190-BatTransportInstructions.pdf): doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/Pubs/420-190-BatTransportInstructions.pdf)