



Public Works Tool Box Talk

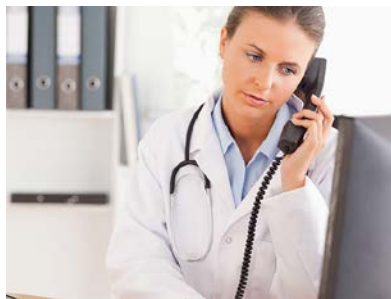
Rabies

Rabies is a viral disease most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The infected saliva enters the body through a bite or broken skin and travels from the wound to the brain, where it causes swelling, or inflammation. This inflammation leads to symptoms of the disease. Very rarely, rabies has been transmitted without an actual bite. This is believed to have been caused by infected saliva that has gotten into the air/contamination of mucous membranes (eyes, nose and mouth).



The vast majority of rabies cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) each year occur in wild animals, most commonly raccoons, skunks, bats, foxes. Rabies strains have also been noted in coyotes. Recently more cases of human rabies have been linked to bats and raccoons. There have been no reports of rabies caused by dog bites in the United States for a number of years due to widespread animal vaccination.

The rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death. The incubation period ranges from 10 days - 7 years. The average incubation period is 3 - 7 weeks. The early symptoms of rabies in people are similar to that of many other illnesses, including fever, headache, and general weakness or discomfort. As the disease progresses, more specific symptoms appear and may include insomnia, anxiety, confusion, slight or partial paralysis, excitation, hallucinations, agitation, increase in saliva, difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia (fear of water). Death usually occurs within days of the onset of these symptoms.



Call your doctor right away after an animal bite or after being exposed to animals such as bats, foxes, and skunks. Try to gather as much information about the animal as possible. Call your local animal control authorities to safely capture the animal. If rabies is suspected, the animal will be watched for signs of rabies or a test can be completed on the animal's brain tissue after an animal is dead.

Clean the wound well with soap and water, and seek professional medical help. You'll need a doctor to thoroughly clean the wound and remove any foreign objects. Most of the time, stitches should not be used for animal bite wounds.



If there is any risk of rabies, Immunization and treatment for possible rabies are recommended for at least up to 14 days after exposure or a bite. A series of preventive vaccines is generally given in 5 doses over 28 days. Most patients also receive a treatment called human rabies immunoglobulin (HRIG). This is given the day the bite occurred.

**More information is available on line through the Minnesota Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control.**