Rabies Vaccine Treatment

Rabies is a serious disease caused by a virus that attacks the nerves and brain of warm-blooded animals (mammals). In the United States, wild animals such as raccoons, skunks, foxes and bats are most likely to carry rabies. Although rare, pet dogs and cats who have not been vaccinated, can get it.

The virus is carried in the saliva (spit) of an infected animal. If that animal bites or scratches a person, the virus can spread to humans. When rabies is carried by a bat, coming in contact with bat saliva is enough to get the disease. There does not have to be an actual bite for a person to be infected.

To know if an animal has rabies, it must be euthanized (put to sleep) to test its brain tissue. You should consider any bite by a wild animal as a risk for rabies until proven otherwise. It is important to call your health care provider or go to an Urgent Care after all animal bites.

After a bite or scratch from an animal

If an unknown animal bites or scratches your child, wash the area with soap and water. Then call or go see a health care provider right away. The health care provider will decide if anti-rabies treatment is needed.

Do not wait until your child has symptoms. Untreated rabies is almost always deadly.

If your child has never received rabies vaccines in the past and the health care provider thinks they should be treated, they will need 5 injections (shots). Children who are immunosuppressed may need 6.

- Rabies Immune Globulin (RIG) is given to people who have never received it before. It is given at the same time as the first of the 4 rabies shots.
- People who have had RIG before, will only get 4 rabies vaccines.
- All rabies vaccines must be given over 2 weeks (unless your child is immunosuppressed).

Your child must receive all the shots for the vaccine to be effective and to prevent getting rabies.
Your child’s health care provider has decided that your child needs anti-rabies treatment. Today they received the RIG and the first rabies vaccine.

**It is very important to get the 3 other shots over the next 2 weeks.**

We have scheduled your child to return to Nationwide Children’s Hospital Urgent Care on the following dates:

#3 on day 3 ____________  #4 on day 7 ____________  #5 on day 14 ____________

The Urgent Care on the main campus of the hospital is open from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily except for holidays. Please call (614) 722-4334 to check holiday hours if needed.

If you cannot return to the Nationwide Children’s Hospital Urgent Care on the days scheduled, let us know in advance. Call (614) 722-4300. We might be able to arrange for your child to get the shots at a doctor’s office or at the Health Department.

**Reaction to rabies treatment**

Reactions (side effects) to the rabies treatment are rare. They may include the following:

- slight fever, chills
- slight headache or dizziness
- muscle aches
- pain, redness, swelling or itchiness at injection site
- weakness or fatigue
- stomachache, nausea, vomiting

**Interactions**

The RIG rabies vaccine uses live virus. It can affect how well other live vaccines work. Tell your child’s health care provider if they get anti-rabies vaccines. Your child may need a booster vaccine for one recently received or have to wait 4 months before getting other vaccines like the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella).

**How to avoid animal bites**

Teach your child how to avoid animal bites. If approached by an animal that may attack:

- **Never** scream and run.
- **Stand very still** with hands at your sides. **Avoid eye contact** with the dog.
- Once the animal loses interest in you, slowly back away until it is out of sight.
- If the animal does attack, give it your jacket or put something between you and the animal, like a book bag.
- If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your ears and do not move. Play dead and try not to scream or move.
Never tease or chase an animal or pull its ears, tail or paws, even if you know the animal.

Always walk away if an animal is growling or starts to growl when approached. Never run!

Do not bother an animal while it is eating.

Do not eat or carry food when a strange animal is nearby.

Never try to pet or catch a wild animal.

Do not go near stray animals or animals you do not know.

Ways to avoid rabies

Get your dog, cat or ferret vaccinated against rabies. Have the animal wear its rabies tag.

Keep cats and dogs away from wildlife. Walk dogs on a leash.

If you see any animal acting strangely, have your parents or another adult call Animal Control.

If you see a bat in your house, the best thing to do is to leave it alone and tell your parents. They can call Franklin County Public Health at (614) 525-3160 to come get a dead bat or call a wildlife specialist to catch it.

Never adopt wild animals or try to nurse sick wild animals back to health. If you find a sick or injured wild animal, call Animal Control, your local veterinarian or in the Central Ohio area, the Crisis Hotline for the Ohio Wildlife Center at (614) 793-9453.

All animal bites need to be reported to Franklin County Public Health within 24 hours. Call (614) 525-3160 or search for the Animal Bite Intake form at: www.myfcph.org. The form will ask for:

- owner’s name, address and phone number
- type of animal, color and breed
- proof of rabies vaccine or a rabies tag