

For more information during business hours, contact:

Bureau of Communicable Disease
for questions on human rabies prophylaxis 212-788-9830

Veterinary Public Health Services
for questions on animals and laboratory testing 212-676-2483

During non-business hours, contact:

NYC Poison Control Center 212-POISONS or
212-764-7667

Definition of Exposure

Exposure. Rabies is transmitted by introducing the virus into open cuts or wounds or by contact with mucous membranes. There are 2 main types:

Bite (higher-risk)—Any penetration of skin by an animal's teeth. Bites to the face and hand and multiple bites carry the highest risk.

Non-bite (lower-risk)—Scratches or abrasions received from an animal, or the contamination of open cuts or wounds with an animal's saliva or brain and other neural tissue. Non-bite transmission of rabies is rare.

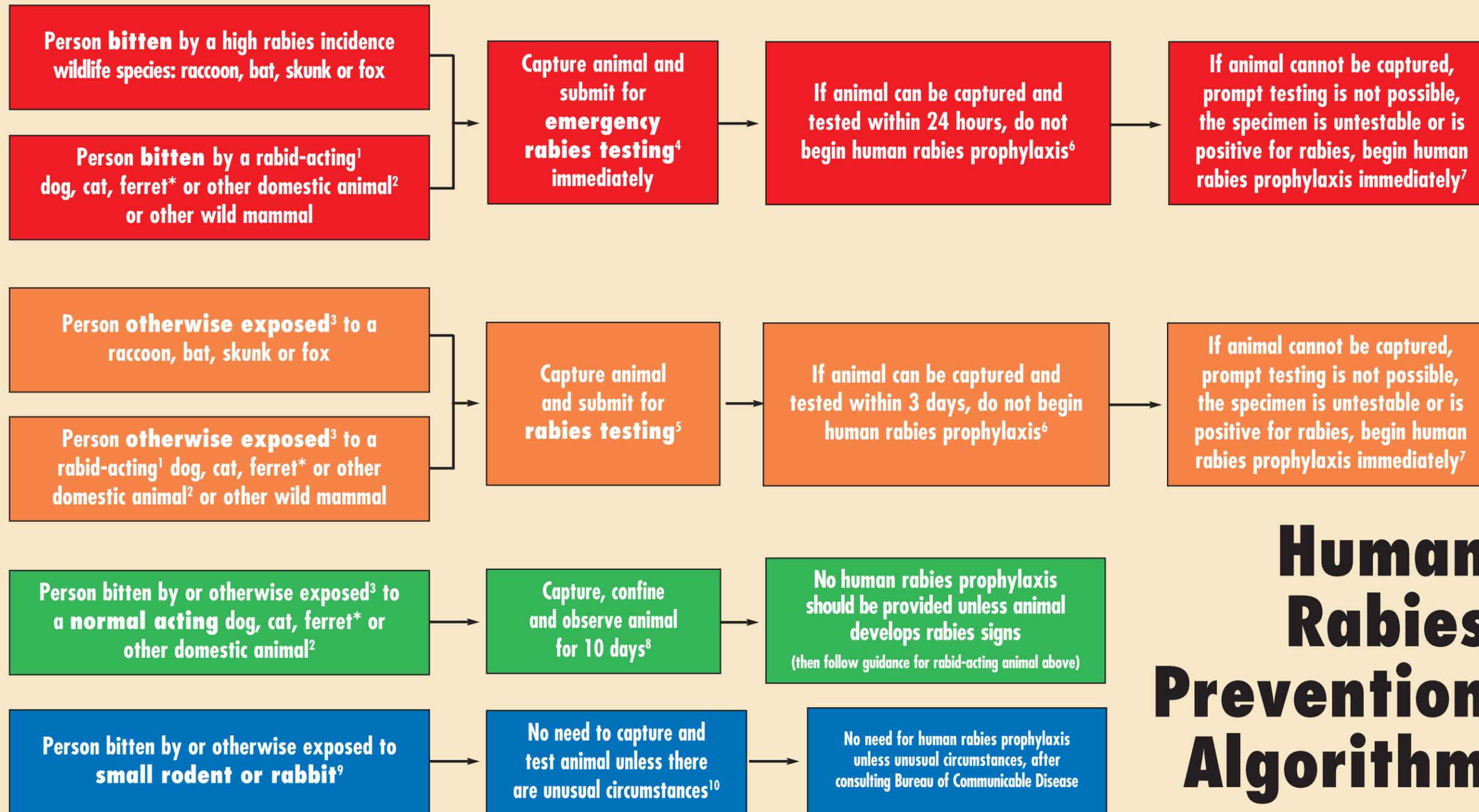
Non-Exposure. Other contact by itself, such as petting or handling an animal, or coming into contact with the blood, urine, or feces of an animal, does not constitute exposure, and, therefore, does not require rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).

Possible Exposure to a Bat. Contact with a bat constitutes exposure, just as it does for other species. In addition, because people have developed rabies after inapparent bat exposures, PEP may be appropriate even in the absence of demonstrable bite, scratch, or mucous membrane exposure in situations in which there is a reasonable probability that such an exposure occurred.

Examples of situations in which exposure may be a reasonable probability: Bat is found in the same room with someone who might be unaware that an exposure has occurred, for example, a sleeping person, an unattended child, or a mentally-disabled or intoxicated person •Child touches a bat •Bat flies into someone, touching bare skin •Someone with bare feet steps on a bat •Person puts hand in firewood or brush, feels pain, then sees a bat

Examples of situations in which exposure is unlikely: Bats are heard or seen in walls or attic of a house •Bat guano is found in sleeping quarters •Teenager or adult touches a bat, but is certain they were not bitten or scratched •Bat swoops by a teenager or adult who does not feel it touch •Person has contact with a completely dried-up carcass of a bat

For consultation on what constitutes exposure, call the Bureau of Communicable Disease at 212-788-9830



Human Rabies Prevention Algorithm

* Ferrets are prohibited in New York City

Animal bites are reportable in NYC. Call Veterinary Public Health Services at 212-676-2483

- Rabid-acting: a combination of neurologic signs, best interpreted by a veterinarian, including a change in or unusual behavior, extreme aggressiveness, paralysis, convulsions, excess salivation, difficulty eating or drinking, or unusual vocalizations.
- Domestic animals: horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and swine (pigs).
- Otherwise exposed: See Definition of Exposure for a complete definition of exposure. Also includes scratches or other fresh wounds or mucous membranes contaminated with the animal's saliva; also includes a 'reasonable probability' of an undetected bite from a bat, as evidenced by direct skin contact with a bat, or a bat found in the room with a sleeping person, unattended child or person with mental impairment.
- Emergency rabies testing requires consultation with Veterinary Public Health Services at 212-676-2483 during business hours, or 212-POISONS (764-7667) during off hours, weekends and holidays. Emergency testing can provide results the same day.
- Routine rabies testing: submission to the New York City Public Health Rabies Laboratory is coordinated through the Veterinary Public Health Services by calling 212-676-2483. Test results are available within 24 hours of submission to the Public Health Laboratory, or the same day for specimens that arrive in the morning. All efforts should be made for up to 3 days to capture and test animals when there has been a possibility of exposure, because most will be negative for rabies and will eliminate the need for rabies prophylaxis. Ensure the animal that is identified is truly the animal responsible for the human exposure when making the decision about the need for rabies prophylaxis.
- Rabies prophylaxis should not be started when animal capture, confinement, euthanasia, specimen shipment, or testing is in process to determine the rabies status of the animal, unless it is a high-risk head wound or severe attack to a small child and the animal has a high probability of being rabid (high risk species or rabid-acting animal).
- Except for those previously vaccinated, rabies post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) includes (1) 1.0 mL doses of vaccine administered IM in the deltoid area on days 0, 3, 7, 14, and 28; and (2) rabies immune globulin (RIG). To avoid PEP failure, all the RIG must be infiltrated into and around the wounds [20 IU/kg body weight; calculation formula: #cc=(weight in lbs x 9.09)/150]. If not feasible due to the wound site, a mucous membrane exposure, or unknown exposure site in 'reasonable probability' bat exposures, administer RIG IM at a site distant from vaccine administration (e.g., deltoid of opposite arm from one receiving vaccine). Those with certain types of previous rabies immunization (i.e., a completed pre-exposure or post-exposure prophylaxis series) should receive prophylaxis consisting of vaccine only, given on days 0 and 3. For details on appropriate treatment regimens see the federal guidance document "Human Rabies Prevention—United States, 1999: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)", available on our website at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/cd/cdcrab-mmwr-1999.pdf>.
- Observe animal for 10 days: NYC requires that the animal is confined and observed by the owner for 10 days to watch for symptoms of rabies. All efforts should be made for up to 3 days to capture the animal and place it under a 10-day confinement and observation for rabies signs. If the animal is observed to be symptom-free during the 10-day confinement, it did not have rabies virus in its saliva at the time of exposure, and no human rabies post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is needed. Due to presence of rabies in NYC, rabies PEP is commonly considered in NYC when the animal is not tested or is not available for the 10 day observation period, although additional factors may be evaluated, including animal behavior, species-specific incidence, circumstances of exposure, sightings of a healthy but uncaptured animal during the 10-day period, etc. If an animal dies or becomes ill during the 10 day observation period, immediately contact Veterinary Public Health Services during business hours, or 212-POISONS (764-7667) during off hours, weekends and holidays. Veterinary Public Health Services will arrange for the sick or dead animal to be evaluated by a veterinarian or submitted for rabies testing.
- Small rodents (mice, rats, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, squirrels, chipmunks, moles, voles), wild rabbits and woodchucks have rarely been found rabid in NY State, so they should not be submitted for testing unless there are unusual circumstances and there is consultation with Veterinary Public Health Services. Similarly, persons should not be provided rabies post exposure prophylaxis for exposures unless there are unusual circumstances and there is consultation with the Bureau of Communicable Disease.
- Unusual circumstances: If there has been a bite from a small rodent or rabbit, the animal is available for testing, and there is considerable concern about the incident and/or the animal has been acting rabid, the animal may be submitted for routine rabies testing. Both in NY State and elsewhere, pet rabbits and small rodents caged or allowed to roam outside have, in rare circumstances, developed rabies (probably because the cage protected them from more serious wounds that would have led to their deaths). This information should be provided to the bite victims and considered when reaching a decision about testing the animal.