

What to Do if You Are Bitten by an Animal

Wash the wound with soap and water immediately.

Consult a physician right away, even if you think the bite is not serious. You may need a tetanus shot or other medical treatment to control infection. You should also be evaluated for your possible risk of exposure to rabies. **Call 911 if you need immediate assistance.**

If possible, without risking additional bites, capture and confine a biting cat or dog. Do not attempt to capture a raccoon or other wild animal by yourself. To get help or to report a bite, call **Animal Care and Control at 311**, or your local police precinct.

All animal bites or scratches should be reported to the **New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)** which operates Monday through Friday, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. You will be asked for a detailed description of the animal, what happened and the location of the incident. The DOHMH will advise you how to confine and observe an animal for signs of rabies and answer any other questions you might have.

Protecting Your Pet

Follow the law - it's there to protect both people and pets:

- License your dog
- Leash and monitor your dog in public places
- Vaccinate your dogs and cats for rabies.

Keep your property free of wild animals:

- Feed your pet indoors
- Tightly cover garbage cans
- Close openings in your garage, attic or porch; cap your chimney with screens.

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH, Commissioner

To report a bite, or to learn more about rabies, visit nyc.gov/health or call 311.

RABIES



***Protecting Yourself
and Your Pets***

Animal bites are a serious problem.

Nationwide, about **4.7 million** people are reported with animal bites every year. In New York City, about **6,000** people a year are reported with animal bites. Most of these people are children.

Some animal bites can cause serious infections, and even transmit rabies.

What is Rabies?

Rabies is a viral infection of the nervous system. It is almost always fatal, unless preventive treatment (antibodies plus a vaccine) is administered *as soon as possible* after a bite, before any symptoms develop. Even a delay of one or two days can make a difference. In almost all cases, once symptoms appear, no treatment is effective.

Rabies is transmitted most often through a bite from an infected animal. Although less likely, infection can also occur if the saliva of a rabid animal comes in contact with open cuts or wounds in skin or with mucous membranes, such as the eyes, nose, or mouth. Rabies cannot be transmitted by petting or handling an animal, or even by coming into contact with an animal's blood, urine or feces.

While any mammal can carry rabies, the disease is most often seen among wild mammals, especially *raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes*. Cats and dogs can also get rabies if they are not properly vaccinated. Rabbits and small rodents (such as chipmunks, gerbils, guinea pigs, hamsters, mice, rats, and squirrels) are rarely found to be infected with rabies and have not been known to transmit rabies to people.

If a cat or dog remains healthy for 10 days after it has bitten a person, it means that the animal could not have transmitted rabies at the time of the bite. This is why a biting cat or dog must be confined for 10 days after the bite and observed for signs of rabies.

Signs of Rabies in an Animal Include:

- Unusual behavior changes (becoming suddenly extremely aggressive or withdrawn; eating wood, stones, or foreign objects)
- Increased drooling or foaming at the mouth
- Staring into space
- Becoming paralyzed.

Take Special Care Around Bats

In recent years, most cases of human rabies in the United States have been associated with bats. In almost all of these cases, however, there was no obvious sign of a bite or scratch. Because it appears that rabies can be transmitted to people by bats even from minor or completely unrecognized bites, it is important to take special care around bats.

If you come into physical contact with a bat and think you were bitten or scratched, call a physician right away to be evaluated for rabies exposure.

An evaluation for rabies exposure is also needed if a bat is found in the same room with someone who might be unaware that they have been bitten (for example, a sleeping person, an unattended child, or a mentally disabled or intoxicated person).

Tips That May Prevent or Stop an Animal Attack:

Avoid behavior that can provoke an attack:

- Never approach - or let your children approach - a wild or stray animal, or an animal you don't know
- Never disturb an animal that is eating, sleeping, or caring for its young
- Never run past an animal.

If you are faced with a threatening animal, protect yourself:

- Remain calm
- Do not turn, scream, or run
- Avoid direct eye contact
- If you are knocked to the ground by an animal, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck
- Protect your face.