

# Rabies

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## What is it?

- Rabies is caused by an infection with the rabies virus.
- Rabies affects the nervous system of humans and animals.
- Human symptoms include:
  - headache
  - fever
  - strange behaviour
  - muscle spasm
  - hard time swallowing
  - lots of drooling
- Once a person develops symptoms, there is no cure and the infected person almost always dies.

## How is it spread?

- The virus is carried in the saliva (spit) of an infected animal.
- People usually get infected after a rabid animal bites them. Rabies can spread when the infected animal saliva gets into a cut, wound, or mucous membrane (lining of the mouth, nose or eyes).
- It takes about 3 to 8 weeks for rabies to develop after a person is exposed to a rabid animal. However, the symptoms may appear as soon as 5 days afterwards to more than 1 year later.

## If you think you have come in contact with rabies, act now:

- wash the affected skin area with soap and water for several minutes
- wash the clothing in hot soapy water, if the animal saliva is on your clothing
- call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency room

Your risk of contracting rabies must be checked and if needed, treatment started.

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## Is there treatment for it?

- If rabies develops, there is no cure.
- However, it can be prevented by having the rabies vaccine and rabies immune globulin (RIG). These must be given as soon as possible after exposure to an animal that may have rabies.

## What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

- Make sure your pets get their rabies vaccine. Keep all vaccines up to date!
- Do not let your pets roam free outdoors, especially at night.
- Avoid contact with wildlife and do not handle wild animals. This includes not feeding wildlife. Appreciate them from a distance.
- Teach your children not to go near animals they do not know, even if they seem friendly or are sick and need help.

## For more information visit:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies>

Government of Canada

[Fact Sheet - Rabies - Canadian Food Inspection Agency \(canada.ca\)](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/fact-sheet/rabies)

**Adherence to Infection Prevention and Control measures by staff and visitors is required to prevent the spread of infection.**

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.  
Clean your hands.**



This fact sheet provides basic general information only and is to be used as a quick guide, not as a complete resource on the subject. If you have any further questions, ask Infection Prevention & Control or your health care provider.