

RABIES

GET THE FACTS



What are the risks for contracting rabies?

Animals infected with rabies can transmit the virus through saliva in instances of bites, scratches, and/or other related animal encounters. For instance, if you find a bat in your living space, you could have been bitten or otherwise exposed to a rabid animal without knowing it. If you feel like you have been exposed to a wild animal or otherwise have concerns about an animal-related exposure (bites, scratches, exposure to a wild animal), please contact the Northern Kentucky Health Department (NKY Health) Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) Division at (859) 341-4151 for proper advisement.

What should I do if I am bit or otherwise exposed to a potentially rabid animal (i.e. bat found in your living space, exposed and/or bitten by a wild animal, or bitten by a dog, cat, or other mammal)?

Immediately cleanse the wound with soap, water, and a disinfectant. Seek proper medical treatment. Contact the NKY Health EH&S Division at (859) 341-4151 and your local animal control authority for advice on next steps.

What if the animal I was exposed to tested positive for rabies?

There is a post-exposure rabies vaccine series you will need to follow. Rabies is a viral disease that is preventable. If not properly treated, rabies is a disease that is fatal to humans. Immediately go to St. Elizabeth Hospital Emergency Room (ER) to receive your first round of the rabies immune globulin (IG) and your first dose of rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). The rabies vaccine is a series, so in addition to the first shot, you will also receive a rabies vaccination on day 3, 7, and 14 after the exposure incident. After the first round of vaccine, the remainder of the series will need to be scheduled with the St. Elizabeth Central Scheduling at (859) 655-7400.

How can I prevent being exposed to the rabies virus?

Keep your distance from wild animals. Approach pets carefully and ask the owner about safety before engaging with the animal. If you see an animal behaving strangely, do not approach the animal. Immediately, contact the appropriate local animal control authority. **As for your own pets, ensure that you get your pets properly vaccinated against rabies on their regularly needed schedule.**

How do I figure out if the animal I was exposed to has the potential for carrying the rabies virus?

Contact the NKY Health EH&S Division at (859) 341-4151. NKY Health will advise on the next appropriate steps. If a dog, cat, or ferret has bitten you, that animal will need to be properly quarantined by a representative of NKY Health for 10 days to monitor for symptoms suggestive of rabies. If the located dog, cat, or ferret is not up to date on rabies shots, a "Notice to Vaccinate" will be issued to the owner at the time of quarantine release. If the animal cannot be located, contact the NKY Health EH&S Division at (859) 341-4151 for proper advisement. Contact your local animal control authority and/or an animal removal company for capturing wild animals. Wild animals generally will need to be properly euthanized and prepped for rabies testing by a licensed veterinarian, local animal control authority, or a certified animal removal company to be properly tested for rabies.

The cost of the rabies vaccine series can be expensive. What should I do?

The rabies post-exposure prophylaxis series can be expensive depending upon insurance coverage, etc. There are vaccine manufacturers and insurance companies that may be able to decrease the cost of the vaccine series. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the NKY Health EH&S Division at (859) 341-4151 for more information.

HELPFUL CONTACTS:

NORTHERN KENTUCKY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
(859)-341-4151
ST. ELIZABETH SCHEDULING
(859)-655-7400

TO LEARN MORE:

CDC.GOV/RABIES
NKYHEALTH.ORG
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