

Rabies

The rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death. Mostly spread to people through rabid animal bites or scratches. Symptoms of rabies include fever, headache, feeling anxious, hydrophobia (fear of water), paralysis and discomfort at the site of the bite. Death usually occurs within days of the onset of these symptoms and fatality is almost 100%.

Dogs and cats are the reservoir of the virus in developing countries. Wild animals like bats, ferret-badgers, raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes and other human biting mammals are. The virus is primarily spread to the human body via bites or scratches with virus-containing saliva of a rabid animal.

The incubation period of rabies in human is generally 1-3 months, but may vary from less than 7 days to more than a year. The incubation period is depending upon factors such as the severity of wounds, nerve distribution around wounds, location of virus entry and viral load.

Treatment after animal bite

Once you have been bitten by animals, please:

1. Memorize: Stay calm and memorize the characteristics of the animal that bit you.
2. Flush: Clean the wound with running water and soap for 15 minutes. Disinfect the wound with iodine or 70 % alcohol solution.
3. Seek: Seek medical attention as soon as possible, and let the doctor determine whether rabies post-exposure prophylaxis is necessary.
4. Observe: If possible, keep the biting animal under observation for 10 days. However, if the animal is aggressive, do not forcibly try to catch the animal.

Rabies Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)

A completed pre-exposure prophylaxis is a 3- dose course of vaccination given on days 0, 7, and 21 (or 28).

Rabies Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

If you are bitten or scratched by animals, and have never received pre-exposure prophylaxis, you should:

1. Receive a 4-dose course of vaccination given on days 0, 3, 7, and 14.
2. Be assessed by a physician and be given rabies immune globulin (RIG) when necessary.

If you are bitten or scratched by animals, and had completed pre-exposure prophylaxis, you should:

1. Receive 2 doses of rabies vaccine on days 0 and 3. (In rare situations, additional doses might be recommended by the physician when necessary)
2. Not receive rabies immune globulin (RIG) treatment.

In severely immunocompromised patients,

1. RIG should be given in patients with category II or III exposure, irrespective of PrEP histories.
2. Four-dose course of rabies vaccine are given as 2 doses on days 0 at separate injection sites and one dose on day 7 and 14 (2-1-1), irrespective of PrEP histories.
3. If the above 4-dose schedule is infeasible, the alternative 5 dose of rabies vaccine could be scheduled on day 0, 3, 7, 14, and 28 (1-1-1-1-1).