



Durham Region Health Department FAX about...

For Health Care Professionals



Rabies: Reminder to Assess, Treat, and Report

Recently a human case of rabies has been reported in Ontario. Ontario's last domestic case of human rabies occurred in 1967.

Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) should begin **immediately** following exposure to a wild terrestrial carnivore (such as a fox, skunk or raccoon) unless the animal is available for rabies testing and rabies is not considered likely.

When there is a known **bat** bite, scratch or saliva exposure into a wound or mucous membrane, rabies PEP should be initiated **immediately** because of the higher prevalence of rabies in bats.

- This is particularly important when the exposure involves the face, neck or hands, or if the bat has attacked the person or hangs on tenaciously (indicating abnormal behaviour).
- If the bat is available for testing, PEP may be discontinued after consultation with a public health inspector and if the bat tests negative for rabies.

Post-exposure prophylaxis is **not recommended** if the bite or scratch involves a domestic animal such as a dog, cat or ferret **AND** the animal is available for a 10-day observation period by DRHD.

PEP of previously unimmunized individuals should consist of both Rabies Immune Globulin (RabIg) and rabies vaccine. For more information on recommendations for administration of PEP to both previously unimmunized and previously immunized individuals, please visit the [rabies post-exposure prophylaxis](#) section of our Health Care Provider webpage on durham.ca/hcp (under Tools and guidance documents).

To order rabies PEP, contact DRHD at 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 (ext. 4699) during regular business hours. After regular business hours (between 4:30 pm and 8:30 am), during weekends and holidays please call 1-800-372-1104 or 905-576-9991.

... over

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



Rabies Risk Assessment

Rabies reservoir species include bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes. Domestic animals such as cats, dogs and cattle may also get rabies if exposed to an infected animal. Rabies virus is spread from an infected animal to another, or from an infected animal to a human, through close contact with infected saliva (i.e., bites, contact with an open cut, sore, or wound, contact with mucous membranes such as mouth, nasal cavity, eyes, and careless handling of a dead rabid animal).

Squirrels, hamsters, guinea-pigs, gerbils, chipmunks, rats, mice or other small rodents, as well as lagomorphs (such as rabbits and hares) are only rarely found to be infected with rabies. PEP should be considered if the animal's behaviour was highly unusual.

If you need additional assistance with risk assessment questions please contact a public health inspector at 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 or after hours, weekends and holidays 905-576-9991. Or, please visit the [rabies post-exposure prophylaxis](#) section of our Health Care Provider webpage on [durham.ca/hcp](#) (under Tools and guidance documents).

Requirement to Report

Under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, Ontario Regulation 557 section 2(1) states:

A physician, registered nurse in the extended class, veterinarian, police officer or any other person who has information concerning **either or both of the following** shall, as soon as possible, notify the Medical Officer of Health and provide the Medical Officer of Health with the information, including the name and contact information of the exposed person, for:

- Any bite from a mammal (including household pets)
- Any contact with a mammal that is conducive to the potential transmission of rabies to persons

To report exposure with a bat, wild life, domestic animal or livestock please complete the [Animal Bite/Exposure Form](#) ([durham.ca/hcp](#), under forms, reporting) and fax it to the confidential line at 905-666-1887. To speak with a public health inspector, please call Durham Health Connection Line at 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729. After regular business hours (between 4:30 pm and 8:30 am), during weekends and holidays please call 1-800-372-1104 or 905-576-9991.

For more information on rabies, please visit [durham.ca/rabies](#).

September 6, 2024