



RABIES OR SUSPECTED HUMAN EXPOSURE

WHAT IS RABIES?

RABIES IS A VIRAL DISEASE THAT AFFECTS THE BRAIN AND SPINAL CORD. IT IS SPREAD FROM INFECTED MAMMALS TO HUMANS AND USUALLY CAUSES DEATH.

WHO GETS RABIES?

ALL WARM-BLOODED MAMMALS INCLUDING HUMANS CAN GET RABIES. AMONG WILD ANIMALS, RABIES IS MOST OFTEN SEEN IN RACCOONS, BATS, SKUNKS AND FOXES.

HOW IS RABIES SPREAD?

PEOPLE CAN GET RABIES IF THEY COME IN CONTACT WITH THE SALIVA OR NERVOUS TISSUE OF A RABID ANIMAL THROUGH A BITE OR SCRATCH.

CAN PEOPLE BE EXPOSED TO RABIES AND NOT KNOW IT?

BATS HAVE SMALL, SHARP TEETH THAT MAY NOT LEAVE A BITE WOUND OR PAIN AT THE BITE SITE, SO SOMETIMES IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE BITTEN WITHOUT KNOWING IT. IF THE BAT IS FOUND, IT SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CAPTURED AND TESTED FOR RABIES.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF RABIES?

EARLY SYMPTOMS INCLUDE IRRITABILITY, HEADACHE, FEVER AND SOMETIMES ITCHING OR PAIN AT THE SITE OF THE BITE OR SCRATCH. THE DISEASE THEN LEADS TO PARALYSIS, SPASMS OF THE THROAT MUSCLES, CONVULSIONS, DELIRIUM AND DEATH.

HOW SOON AFTER EXPOSURE DO SYMPTOMS APPEAR?

SYMPTOMS MAY APPEAR TWO TO EIGHT WEEKS AFTER BEING INFECTED OR AS LONG AS YEARS AFTER EXPOSURE. **Once symptoms appear the disease is almost always fatal.**

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR RABIES?

FIRST, THE WOUND SHOULD BE WASHED WITH LOTS OF SOAP AND WATER. MEDICATION IS GIVEN WITH SEVERAL DOSES OF THE RABIES VACCINE.

WHAT HAPPENS IF RABIES GOES UNTREATED?

EXPOSURE TO A RABID ANIMAL DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN A PERSON WILL GET RABIES. IF TREATMENT IS GIVEN RIGHT AWAY, MOST CASES OF RABIES WILL BE PREVENTED. UNTREATED CASES WILL ALMOST ALWAYS LEAD TO DEATH.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT RABIES?

ALL CATS, DOGS AND FERRETS SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST RABIES AND GET REGULAR BOOSTER SHOTS. PEOPLE SHOULD AVOID CONTACT WITH ALL WILD ANIMALS, ESPECIALLY THOSE ACTING ABNORMALLY.