



Rabies Exposure: Exposure consists of the introduction of virus-laden saliva into the body through a bite or contact of the virus-laden saliva or neural tissue with an open wound or the mucous membranes.

State or local public health officials should be consulted regarding all possible rabies exposures; 24/7 consultation is available by calling 701.328.2378 or toll-free 800.472.2180.

1. For all possible rabies exposures

- a. Determine if there was a true exposure (see the definition above).
- b. Implement proper wound management.
- c. Make sure the animal is available for observation or testing; enlist local officials to locate the animal if necessary.

2. Exposure to domestic dogs, cats and ferrets

- a. If the animal is available for testing/observation – in most cases do not start rabies prophylaxis.
- b. Animal not available – enlist local law enforcement to help locate the animal. Under normal circumstances it is okay to wait to administer rabies prophylaxis for a few days while the animal is being located.

3. Exposure to bats

- a. If the bat is available for testing – may not need to start rabies prophylaxis (live bats should be taken to a veterinarian to be euthanized).
- b. Any physical contact with a bat may lead to an exposure.
 - i. Bat bites may not cause deep wounds and may be difficult to discern.
 - ii. If the person is reasonably certain he was not bitten by the bat during the physical contact, rabies prophylaxis is not needed.
- c. Possible bat exposures
 - i. Just having a bat in the house is not considered a rabies exposure. However, these cases should be handled case by case. Generally the following situations are considered exposures:
 1. A person awakens to find the bat in the same room.
 2. A person witnesses a bat in the same room with a person who may not be able to provide a reliable history of exposure to the bat, such as a small child or a mentally disabled person.

4. Exposure to wild animals

- a. Animal available for testing – may not need to start rabies prophylaxis.
- b. High-risk species or animal not available, consider starting rabies prophylaxis, especially for exposures to carnivores, including skunks, raccoons, fox and coyotes.
- c. Because rodents and rabbits are rarely infected with rabies, rabies prophylaxis not normally recommended.

Contact your local public health unit or the North Dakota Department of Health at 701.328.2378 or toll-free 800.472.2180 for further consultation. For laboratory testing, call the Division of Laboratory Services at 701.328.6272.