



**FORTBEND**  
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



In the United States, rabies is mostly found in wild animals like bats, racoon, skunks and foxes.

# WHAT IS RABIES?

Rabies is a fatal but preventable viral disease. It can spread to people and pets if they are bitten or scratched by an infected animal.

The rabies virus infects the central nervous system. If a person does not receive the appropriate medical care after a potential rabies exposure, the virus can cause disease in the brain, ultimately resulting in death.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

After a rabies exposure, the rabies virus has to travel to the brain before it can cause symptoms. This time between exposure and appearance of symptoms is the incubation period. It may last for weeks to months. The incubation period may vary based on

- the location of the exposure site (how far away it is from the brain),
- the type of rabies virus, and
- any existing immunity.

The first symptoms of rabies may be similar to the flu, including:

- Weakness or discomfort
- Fever
- Headache
- Discomfort, prickling, or an itching sensation at the site of the bite

Symptoms then progress to:

- Cerebral dysfunction
- anxiety
- confusion
- agitation
- delirium
- abnormal behavior
- Hallucinations
- Hydrophobia (fear of water)
- insomnia

These symptoms may last for days.

Once clinical signs of rabies appear, the disease is nearly always fatal.



## HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED?

Rabies virus is transmitted through direct contact (such as through broken skin or mucous membranes in the eyes, nose, or mouth) with saliva or brain/nervous system tissue from an infected animal.

People usually get rabies from the bite of an infected animal. It is also possible, but rare, for people to get rabies from non-bite exposures, which can include scratches, abrasions, or open wounds that are exposed to saliva or other potentially infectious material from an infected animal.



# HOW DO YOU PREVENT RABIES?

Here are some tips to follow to prevent rabies in people:



**Leave all wildlife alone. Avoid touching or interacting with any wild animal.**



**Wash animal bites and scratches immediately with soap and water.**



**Talk to your healthcare provider about post-exposure treatment if you are bitten or scratched.**



**Vaccinate your pets to protect them and your family.**

**Rabies in people is completely preventable with prompt medical care.**

Here are some tips to follow to prevent rabies in pets:



**Take your pet to regular veterinarian visits and make sure all rabies vaccines are up-to-date.**



**Maintain control of your pets by keeping cats and ferrets indoors and dogs under direct supervision.**



**Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for.**



**Call animal control to remove any stray animals in your neighborhood since they may be unvaccinated or ill.**



Unrestrained or free-roaming animals are at increased risk of being bitten by rabies infected wildlife. Contact **Fort Bend County Animal Control Services** to remove any stray animals in your neighborhood at **281-341-4665**.

Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html>

*Disclaimer: This information does not constitute medical advice or a doctor-patient relationship*



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