

# Ask CDC

## Rabies

*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.*

Welcome to *Ask CDC*, the weekly podcast that answers *your* questions. I'm your host, Susan Laird.

Our question this week is from a listener who wants to know more about rabies and if he or his kids are at risk for getting rabies.

Rabies is a viral disease that affects humans and animals. It's usually transmitted through the bite of an animal that has the virus. Rabies virus is only found in the saliva and nervous tissue of rabid animals, so contact with blood, urine, or feces from a rabid animal doesn't mean you've been exposed. Most rabies cases reported to CDC occur in wild animals, such as raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes.

Even though rabies is most common in wildlife, human exposures can come from domestic pets, such as cats and dogs. Because pets may have more exposure to wild animals, it's important that your pet stays up-to-date on rabies shots.

The rabies virus infects the brain and spinal cord. If rabies isn't prevented, it can cause serious illness, which *can* lead to death.

The signs and symptoms of rabies typically start around two to three months after exposure to the virus. Some of the first signs of rabies in humans include fever, headache, sore throat, feeling tired, and having pain or tingling where the person was bitten.

As the disease moves to the brain, other symptoms include nervousness, confusion, being upset, trouble sleeping, anxiety, partial paralysis, being really excited, hallucinations, excess saliva in the mouth, fear of water, and difficulty swallowing. As the disease gets worse, the person usually enters into a coma and dies.

Fortunately, there are several things you can do to help avoid the deadly affects of rabies.

- Avoid wildlife and keep food and water indoors so wild animals aren't tempted to come near.
- Keep pets indoors or supervised when outdoors.
- Never pick up or touch unfamiliar animals.
- If you see an animal acting strangely or find a dead animal, contact your local animal control officer.
- If you've been bitten by an animal, wash the wound well with soap and water for at least 15 minutes and see a doctor as soon as possible. Even after exposure to rabies, prompt and appropriate vaccination can prevent rabies from developing.

For more information on rabies, visit [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Children can visit [www.cdc.gov/rabiesandkids](http://www.cdc.gov/rabiesandkids) to check out a website about rabies just for them.

Thanks for listening. To submit *your* question to *Ask CDC*, email us at [askcdc@cdc.gov](mailto:askcdc@cdc.gov).

*[Announcer]* For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.