

## How can I protect myself from rabies?

- Do not feed, touch or adopt wild animals, and be cautious of stray dogs and cats.
- Teach children to leave wildlife alone and to tell an adult if an animal bites or scratches them.
- Tightly close garbage cans or store them in a garage/barn. Open trash attracts wild/stray animals.
- Don't handle or treat sick animals.
- Call your health care provider if an animal bites or scratches you.
- Promptly report animal incidents—especially bites—to the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region, (719) 473-1741, or the local animal control agency.

## How can I protect my pet from rabies?

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all cats, ferrets and dogs through a licensed veterinarian.
- Maintain control of your pets when outdoors.
- Spay or neuter pets; pets that are spayed or neutered are less likely to leave home, become strays and make more stray animals.
- Contact a veterinarian if your dog, cat or livestock is bitten by another animal.



### Is rabies a worldwide concern?

- Rabies is a big problem in Asia, Africa and Central and South America.
- In the United States, rabies cases in animals have been reported in every state except Hawaii.



This pamphlet was produced by  
El Paso County Public Health  
1675 W. Garden of the Gods Rd., Suite 2044  
Colorado Springs, CO 80907  
**(719) 578-3199**  
[www.elpasocountyhealth.org](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org)

11/16/2011

# Facts about Rabies

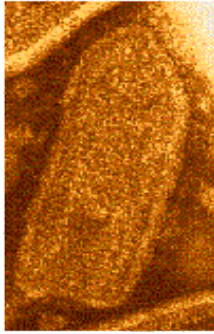


**EL PASO COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEALTH**

*“Protecting and Promoting Public Health and Environmental Quality in the Community through People, Prevention and Partnerships”*

## What is rabies?

Rabies is a virus that affects the central nervous system of mammals, causing a fatal inflammation of the brain and spinal cord. The rabies virus is in the saliva of an infected animal and is transmitted mainly through bites. It also is possible to get the virus through the introduction of saliva into an open wound, cut or mucous membrane, such as the eyes, nose or mouth.

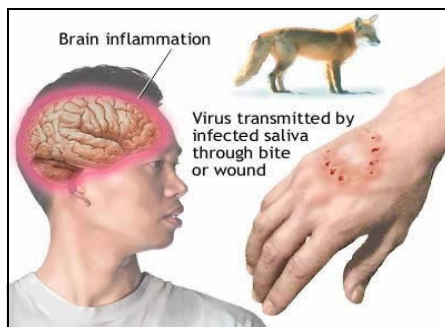


## Who can get rabies?

Rabies is found mainly in wild animals such as bats, skunks, foxes, and raccoons. Pets such as cats and dogs, and livestock, including horses, can get rabies if they have been not been vaccinated and are bitten by rabid wild animals. Rabies is not a risk for reptiles, amphibians and birds.

## How do people get rabies?

The most direct way for people to get rabies is through the bite of infected wild animals.



Rabies is not spread through contact with urine, stool or blood of an infected animal. You cannot get rabies simply by petting an animal.

Domestic dogs, cats or ferrets that bite a human should be put in confinement for a 10-day observation period to determine whether the animal is suffering from symptoms of rabies. If a dog, cat or ferret remains alive and healthy during the 10 days after biting someone, then the animal does not have rabies. The 10-day observation period applies ONLY to dogs, cats and ferrets.

## Rabies in animals

### “Furious” rabies

- Hostility
- Increase in saliva
- Biting at objects
- General sickness

### “Dumb” rabies

- Timid or shy
- Rejects food
- Paralysis of the lower jaw and muscles

## Rabies in humans

Rabies is a fatal disease with progressive symptoms. Once people start to develop the symptoms, they almost always die. Therefore, it is very important to inform your health care provider right away if you have been bitten by an animal that might have rabies. After being exposed to rabies, symptoms may start as early as 30-90 days later, or could occur several years later.

**Symptoms** of rabies in humans may include:

- Pain or tingling at the site of the bite.
- Hallucinations—seeing things that aren't really there.
- Hydrophobia—a fear of water caused by spasms of the throat.
- Paralysis of body parts.



## What treatment do I need if I am exposed to rabies?

The first step to decrease the chances for infection is to immediately wash the wound with soap and water. There also is preventive medication available to treat people who have been exposed to rabies—which is called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Rabies PEP is a series of shots given over the course of two weeks and must be given by a health care provider as soon as possible after exposure.