

**What is rabies?**

Rabies is a disease caused by the rabies virus. Rabies is a disease that affects wild animals, domestic animals (like pets and livestock), and humans. Only mammals can get rabies.

**Who is at risk for rabies?**

All mammals, including man are susceptible to rabies.

**What are the symptoms of rabies?**

Early symptoms include irritability, headache, fever and sometime itching or pain at the site of exposure. The disease eventually progresses to paralysis, spasms of the throat muscles, convulsions, delirium and death. It is important to note that by the time any symptoms appear, rabies cannot be successfully treated.

**How soon do symptoms appear?**

The time between exposure and the onset of symptoms is variable but is normally two to eight weeks in humans. Incubation periods of more than one year have been reported.

**How is rabies spread?**

Rabies is almost always contracted by exposure to a rabid animal. The exposure is usually through a bite, but scratches and saliva contact with broken skin are also possible routes.

**Is a human able to spread rabies?**

Person-to-person transmission is extremely rare; however, precautions should be taken to prevent exposure to the saliva of the diseased person. Tissues from diseased individuals must not be used in transplant procedures.

**How is a person diagnosed?**

Consult a health-care professional.

**What is the treatment?**

If infected, the most effective rabies prevention is immediate, thorough cleansing of animal bite or scratch wounds with liberal amounts of soap and water. Once a health-care professional has determined that an exposure has occurred, treatment is administration by injection of rabies immune globulin (dosage dependent on weight) and four doses of human diploid cell rabies vaccine and is administered in the arm of days zero, three, seven, and 14 after exposure.

**What happens if rabies exposure goes untreated?**

Exposure of a human to a rabid animal does not always result in rabies. If prevention treatment is obtained promptly following a rabies exposure, most cases of rabies will be prevented. Untreated cases will invariably result in death. All animal bites, regardless of whether the animal is available for rabies testing, should be evaluated by a health professional to determine if treatment is necessary.

### **What can be done to prevent the spread of Rabies disease?**

Exposure to rabies may be minimized by eliminating all stray dogs and cats, having pet dogs and cats vaccinated, and staying away from all wild animals, especially those behaving abnormally. Avoid keeping exotic or wild animals as pets. Wear protective gloves when working with sick livestock.

### **Additional Information:**

Is available at [www.ndhealth.gov](http://www.ndhealth.gov) or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

**This disease is a reportable condition. As mandated by North Dakota law, any incidence of this disease shall be reported to the North Dakota Department of Health.**

