

Rabies (Basic)

Once clinical signs appear, death of the animal will soon follow.

Remember: The entire course of clinical rabies in domestic animals usually lasts less than a week.

Rabies Treatment

Emergency first aid to prevent rabies in humans includes the following steps:

- Let the wound bleed.
- **Wash the wound with soap and water.**
- Seek medical attention.

Let the wound bleed to help remove the rabies virus from the wound. Wash the wound with soap and water; this will also help remove the rabies virus from the wound. Apply an antiseptic, if available. Seek medical attention as soon as possible. **Any bite, even a small one, can be deadly.**

Rabies Vaccinations

Vaccinations that a person receives **after** being exposed to rabies are called **postexposure prophylaxis** (prevention). The decision of whether to administer postexposure prophylaxis should be between a person and his or her physician. If the exposure victim has **not** been previously vaccinated against rabies, he or she will need to be treated with two types of products given by injection:

- One product provides **immediate, but temporary, protection against rabies**. It is a type of antiserum called **human rabies immune globulin (HRIG)** and is made of human antibodies. This product is given according to weight, meaning that a heavy person needs more antiserum than a light person. As much as possible is injected around the bite wound(s); any remaining antiserum should be given in the closest muscle mass that's

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large enough to receive the remaining immune globulin (and not where the vaccine is given). These antibodies immediately attack the rabies virus in the body, but they only last a few weeks.

- The other product is a **vaccine**, such as **human diploid cell vaccine (HDCV) or purified chick embryo cell (PCEC)**. **Four doses** of the vaccine are administered in the arm muscle **over a period of two weeks (a fifth dose may be administered to people with poor immune systems)**. The rabies vaccine will cause the body to produce its own antibodies against the rabies virus and provide long-term protection.

Rabies Vaccinations for Animal Control Officers

According to Section 169.24 of the Texas Administrative Code, Rabies Control and Eradication (rules of the Rabies Control Act), **all animal control officers (ACOs) should take a series of rabies vaccinations to protect themselves from rabies.**

This is called preexposure prophylaxis.

- The preexposure vaccinations consist of **three injections with rabies vaccine (such as HDCV or PCEC) given over a 3- to 4-week period.** After you receive this series of vaccinations, you should have your titer checked every two years and get a booster vaccination if needed.
- If you have had preexposure vaccinations and are exposed to rabies, you will only need **two** more injections of rabies vaccine and will **not** need the rabies antiserum (HRIG). Also, if you are exposed to rabies without being aware of it and do not receive postexposure treatment, you stand a better chance of not developing rabies than if you were not vaccinated previously.