

# Rabies and Bats



## WHAT IS RABIES?

Rabies is a virus that infects the brain and spinal cord. Rabies almost always leads to death if left untreated. Rabies can be prevented if treatment is given before symptoms appear.



## HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Rabies spreads when an infected animal bites or scratches a human or another animal. You can also get it from contact with the saliva of an infected animal. In Washington State, the bat is the only known source of rabies. If you see bats with these unusual behaviors, they are more likely to have rabies:

- Unable to fly
- Flying during daytime
- Making a lot of noise or otherwise acting sick



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE EXPOSED TO RABIES

Anyone who had contact with an infected bat or its saliva is at risk of getting rabies. This includes touching a bat, bites, scratches, or any other bare skin contact with a bat or its saliva.



Wash the bite, scratch or contact area immediately with soap and water for at least 10 minutes. Contact your healthcare provider or Public Health (206-296-4774) for guidance about treatment. If you think your pet was exposed to rabies, call your veterinarian.



## YOU CAN'T ALWAYS TELL IF YOU'VE BEEN BITTEN

Bats have very small teeth, so it's possible to be bitten and not know it, and a bite may not leave a clear mark. Treatment to prevent rabies may be needed if a bat is found in the room with anyone who is:



- Sleeping
- An unattended child
- Mentally or physically challenged, or
- Intoxicated



## CAPTURING A BAT FOR RABIES TESTING

If you think you or your pet may have had contact with a bat, it's very important to capture the bat if possible so that it can be tested for rabies. Testing can confirm what follow up treatment is needed, such as rabies vaccinations.



Do not touch or pick up a bat without thick gloves. Some animal control agencies and private companies can help capture a bat. More information on how to safely catch a bat and have it tested for rabies can be found at: [kingcounty.gov/bats](http://kingcounty.gov/bats)



## PROTECTING YOURSELF AND YOUR PETS

Vaccinate your pet to protect them against rabies. In Washington State, up-to-date rabies vaccination is required for dogs, cats and ferrets.



Avoid contact with bats, wild, and stray animals. Bats are shy animals who naturally tend to avoid humans. Never touch them! Learn how to keep bats out of your home: [kingcounty.gov/bats](http://kingcounty.gov/bats)



Teach children to stay away from wild animals and pets that they do not know well. Encourage them to report any animal bites, scratches, or contact with wild animals to an adult.



## MOST BATS DON'T HAVE RABIES

We need bats! Bats are very important to our environment. They disperse fruit seeds, pollinate plants, and eat tons of insects. Bat droppings are an excellent natural fertilizer providing nutrients for many living things. The vast majority of bats **don't** have rabies.

For more information: [kingcounty.gov/bats](http://kingcounty.gov/bats)

Updated 10/11/17