



NEWS

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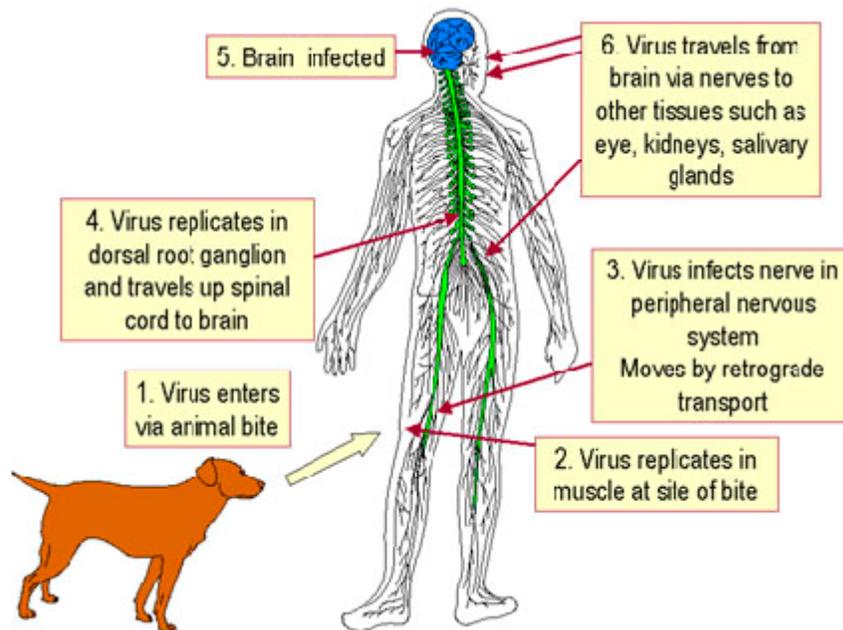
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What is Rabies?

Norristown, PA (June 5, 2013) – The World Health Organization reports that over 55,000 people die of rabies every year worldwide. That is about one person dying of Rabies every ten minutes. There is no cure for rabies once symptoms begin to show.

Rabies is one of the oldest documented diseases in history. Archeologists have found rabies mentioned in documentation from ancient Greece, ancient Rome, and the Renaissance era. Rabies is a fatal disease that attacks the central nervous system of any mammal.

Rabies can be transmitted in several different ways. The first is through saliva contact via a bite or scratch from a rabid animal. The second is by infected saliva coming in contact with an open wound or mucous membrane. The third and rarest transmission method is through organ transplant.



There is no set incubation period for rabies in humans or animals. Symptoms of rabies may appear in a few days or may take years to manifest themselves. The symptoms of rabies infection begin with fever, headache, and common flu-like symptoms. Symptoms can then progress to aggression, hyper salivation, spasms of the throat muscles, hallucinations, and paralysis. Rabies infection ultimately ends in death.

The most common carriers of Rabies in Pennsylvania are bats, cats, dogs, foxes, skunks, raccoons, and groundhogs. To safeguard against rabies, it is important for people to avoid contact with wild and stray animals whenever possible. If a person is bitten or scratched by an animal, that person should seek medical care immediately. Rabies can only be treated before symptoms appear. If a medical professional determines there is a risk of exposure to rabies, the exposed person will receive rabies Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). PEP is a series of injections given at four specific times after exposure.

Circumstances which may indicate a need for rabies PEP include, but are not limited to:

- An individual receiving a bite from any animal that has tested positive for rabies
- An individual receiving a bite from a wild or stray animal that is not available for quarantine or rabies testing
- An individual finding a bat in their home that may have been in their room while they were asleep

In an animal bite situation, if there is an animal that can be quarantined or tested for rabies and is found to be rabies-free, then there is no need to receive rabies PEP.

Montgomery County Health Department (MCHD), in accordance with the public health code, works with individuals involved in bite incidents and to have animals quarantined or tested for rabies.

Individuals who have been bitten or scratched by an animal, or who have found a bat in their home, should report this to MCHD immediately; MCHD will help guide them through the next steps to keep them and their families safe from rabies.

Another important way to prevent rabies transmission is to keep dogs, cats, and ferrets routinely vaccinated for rabies. Every year in the months of June and September, the Montgomery County Health Department has low cost rabies vaccination clinics throughout the county as part of its rabies prevention program. In 2012, the Montgomery County Health Department vaccinated 855 cats, dogs, and ferrets against rabies.

For more information about MCHD's low cost rabies clinics, please visit

<http://www.montcopa.org/index.aspx?nid=1135>. To report an animal bite or a bat found in the home, please call 610-278-5117. For more information about Rabies, please visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html>