



Rabies Quick Facts for the Public

What is rabies and how does it spread?

- Rabies is a deadly viral disease that affects the nervous system (brain, spinal cord, and nerves).
- Rabies is spread by coming in contact with saliva of an infected animal or by being bitten or scratched by an infected animal.
- Animals most likely to carry rabies are dogs, cats, ferrets, bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes, and woodchucks.

How do I protect myself from rabies?

- Make sure dogs, cats, and ferrets are up to date on rabies vaccinations.
- Do not feed, pet, or adopt wild or stray animals.
- Do not feed your animals outside.
- If you see a sick or injured animal do not touch it. Call your local animal control or the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM).
- Make sure trash is tightly covered so animals are not attracted to it.
- Guidelines for bat-proofing your home: (<http://bit.ly/nobat>)

What should I do if I am bitten, scratched, or touch the saliva of an animal?

- Wash wounded area with soap and water for 10-15 minutes to help kill rabies virus.
- Call your doctor or a hospital ER right away.
- Call the Rhode Island Department of Health and your city/town animal control to report the incident.
- If the animal is a stranger's pet, ask for the owner's contact information.

What do I do if my pet gets bitten, scratched, or touches the saliva of another animal?

- Try to find out what animal attacked your pet. **Do not touch the attacking animal.**

- Wear rubber gloves and use a hose to wash your pet's wounds. **Do not touch your pet with bare hands.** There may be saliva from the attacking animal on your pet.
- Call your pet's vet immediately – even if the wound is minor.
- Call your city/town animal control to report the incident.

What should I do if I have a bat in my house?

- If you find a bat in a room and do not know if you were exposed, close all the windows and doors and leave the bat in the room.
- Call your city/town's animal control or a licensed professional to remove the bat.
- If you cannot reach a licensed professional to catch the bat, put on leather gloves and slowly approach the bat when it lands. Place a see-through container over the bat, and slide a lid under the container to trap the bat inside. Securely tape the lid to the container, and punch small holes in the lid so the bat can breathe. Call the Rhode Island Department of Health to arrange for rabies testing.

Contact numbers and Other resources

- Rhode Island Department of Health Rabies Control Program: 401-222-2577
- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM): 401-222-3070
- Information on rabies: www.health.ri.gov/diseases/rabies
- Guidelines for bat-proofing your home: <http://bit.ly/nobat>
- List of licensed Nuisance Wildlife Control Specialists (names and phone numbers): <http://dem.ri.gov/nwcs>.