



**Otsego County
Department of Health
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What you need to know about Bats and Rabies

Why should I learn about bats and rabies?

Most of the recent human rabies cases in the United States have been caused by the rabies virus from bats. Knowing the facts about bats and rabies can help people protect themselves, their families, and their pets.

What is rabies and how do people get it?

Rabies is a viral disease that infects the brain of humans and other mammals. People get rabies from the bite of an animal with rabies (a rabid animal). Any wild mammal, like a raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote, or bat, can have rabies and can give it to people. It is also possible, but quite rare, that people may get rabies if infectious material from a rabid animal, such as saliva, gets directly into their eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound.

Because rabies is a deadly disease, the goal of public health is, first, to prevent human contact with rabies by education and second, to prevent the disease by treatment if contact occurs. Tens of thousands of people are successfully treated each year after being bitten by an animal that may have rabies. A few people die of rabies each year in the United States, usually because they do not know the risks of being bitten by a wild animal and did not get medical care.

What should I do if I come in contact with a bat?

If you are bitten by a bat, or if infectious material (such as saliva) from a bat gets into your eyes, nose, mouth, or a cut, wash the area with soap and water and call your doctor or the Otsego County Department of Health. ***Whenever possible, the bat should be captured and sent to a laboratory for rabies testing.***

Bats have small teeth that may leave marks that are not easy to see. Because of this, you should get medical advice even if you do not see bite marks when you wake up and find a bat in your room, or if you see a bat in the room of a child or near a mentally impaired or intoxicated person. Whenever possible, the bat should be caught and tested for rabies.

What should I do if my pet comes in contact with a bat?

If you think your pet or domestic animal has been bitten by a bat, contact a veterinarian and your local health department immediately for help and have the bat tested for rabies. Pets that are currently vaccinated for rabies need to be boosted within 5 days of the contact. Unvaccinated pets, by NYS law, must be euthanized or, if the pet owner is unwilling to euthanize the pet, the pet must be quarantined for 6 months at owners expense. Remember to keep vaccination up to date for cats, dogs, and ferrets.

How can I safely capture a bat in my home?

If professional help is not available, capture the bat safely as described below:

- You will need: Leather work gloves (put them on), small box or coffee can, piece of cardboard, and tape.
- When the bat lands, move toward it slowly. While wearing the gloves, put the box or coffee can over it. Then slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Tape the cardboard to the container. Contact the local health department for further instructions.

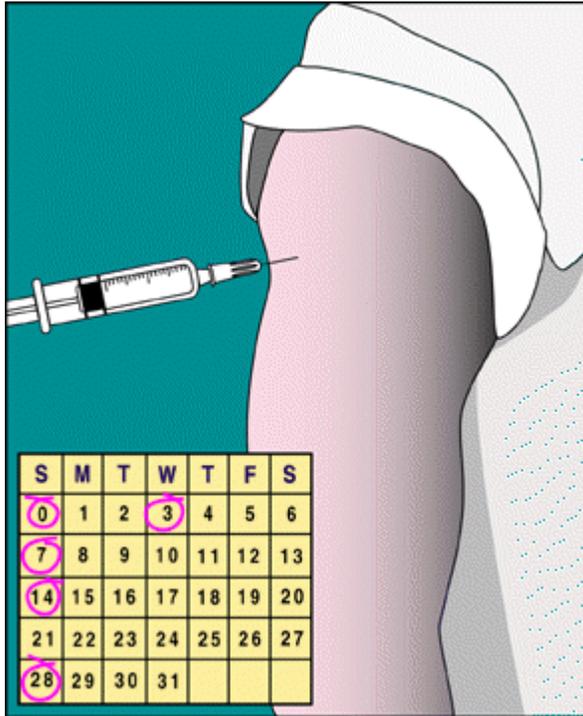
How can rabies be prevented?

- Teach children never to handle wild animals and animals that they do not know. *“Love your own, leave the rest alone”* is a good rule for children to follow.
- Wash any cut or bite from an animal with soap and water and seek medical help right away.
- Stop bats from entering your homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas where they might come in contact with people and pets.
- Be a responsible pet owner:
 - Keep vaccinations current for all dogs, cats and ferrets.
 - Keep your cats and ferrets inside and always watch your dogs when outside.
 - Don't feed pets outside and if you do bring the food in at night.
 - Have your pets spayed or neutered.

What if I've been exposed to a rabid animal?

If you have been exposed to rabies, rabies post exposure treatment will be recommended. Treatment involves a series of injections. These injections are much like getting a tetanus

shot, given in the upper arm, in the deltoid muscle. The treatment follows a set schedule. The start of treatment is Day 0 and usually started at the emergency room. Day 0 you will receive the rabies immunoglobulin, which gives you rabies antibodies and the first rabies vaccine. The remainder of treatment days can be done at your primary providers office. On Day 3, Day 7, Day 14 and Day 28 you will receive one injection of vaccine in your upper arm.



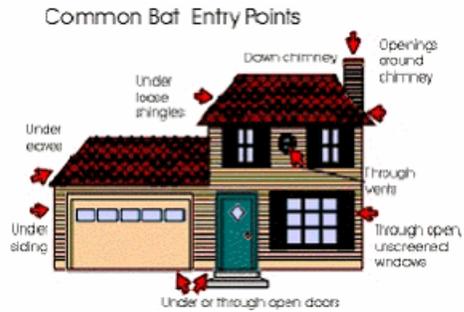
Things to remember when “bat-proofing”

Carefully inspect your home for holes. Any openings larger than a ¼ inch by ½ inch should be filled in with caulk. This includes electrical and plumbing holes.

Use window screens, chimney caps, and draft-guards beneath doors to attics. Make sure that all doors to the outside are closed tightly.

Watch for where the bats exit at dusk and stop them by loosely hanging a piece of clear plastic or bird netting over these areas. Bats can crawl out and leave, but cannot re-enter. After all the bats are out of the opening, then permanently close the holes.

- Most bats leave in the fall or winter to hibernate, so these are the best times to bat proof your home.
- During summer, many young bats are unable to fly. If you get rid of the adult bats during this time, the young may be trapped inside and die or make their way into your home. For this reason, avoid exclusion from May through August.



For more information call Otsego County Department of Health at (607) 547-4230 Monday through Friday 9 am to 5 pm. After hours and weekends call the sheriffs department at (607) 547-4273 and ask for the Public Health Nurse on call to be paged. The nurse will call you back.

For Rabies information go to www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies

common/rabies/rabies brochure