

Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP): What you need to know

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system caused by a virus that can occur in humans and animals. The virus is spread to people from the saliva of infected animals, usually through a bite. In rare cases, rabies can be spread when infected saliva gets into an open wound or the mucous membranes, such as the mouth or eyes. Any potential contact with a bat should be considered a risk of rabies exposure since bites or scratches from a bat can be too small to see or even feel.

In Utah, the most common rabid animals are bats. Raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes, dogs, cats, and ferrets can also be infected with rabies, but this is uncommon in Utah.

Rabies in humans is deadly almost 100% of the time. Anyone who has exposure to a potentially rabid animal should call their healthcare provider and/or [local health department](#) immediately. Contact [animal control](#) or the [Division of Wildlife Resources](#) for help to trap wild animals for rabies testing, or help with quarantine (separation of the animal) and observation of a biting dog, cat, or ferret. If at all possible, rabies testing of wild animals or bite quarantines of dogs and cats is very important to determine whether post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is needed for the person who was exposed to the animal. If the animal tests positive for rabies or cannot be tested or quarantined to rule out rabies, anyone who was exposed to the animal should start PEP as soon as possible to prevent rabies disease.

PEP consists of a single dose of human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) injected at the site of the bite, and 4 doses of rabies vaccine given on day 0 (the first day of treatment), 3, 7, and 14. HRIG provides immediate protection until the body can respond to the vaccine by actively producing immunity. Rabies vaccines are given in your arm, similar to a flu shot. If a person has a weakened immune system, a 5th vaccine dose may be recommended.

HRIG and the first rabies vaccine should be given as soon as possible after exposure. HRIG is only available at a hospital, so the first treatment (day 0) must be given in an emergency room. Click on the link below for more information on where to go for PEP.

If given properly and soon after exposure, PEP is 100% effective in preventing rabies. Most health insurance covers rabies PEP, but you should check with your insurance provider and your doctor about your cost of treatment. If you are underinsured or uninsured, we recommend you reach out to the vaccine manufacturers for information on their [financial assistance programs](#).

Click [here](#) to find PEP providers in your area

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	Date	Hospital/clinic where PEP dose was administered	Notes
Day 0: HRIG + 1 st Vaccine			
Day 3: 2 nd Vaccine			
Day 7: 3 rd Vaccine			
Day 14: 4 th Vaccine			
<i>Immunosuppressed patients ONLY -</i> Day 28: 5 th vaccine			