

BAT RABIES in South Dakota



Unlike most animal bites, bat bites can be very difficult to detect. Punctures can be less than 1 mm in diameter and scratches less than 1 cm in length. Since bat bites are surface wounds, you may not feel pain and may not realize that an exposure even took place.

42 rabid bats were reported in South Dakota from 2009-2018

10 cases of human rabies caused by bats in the USA from 2008-2017 (none in South Dakota)

In the following circumstances, the bat should be captured if at all possible and submitted for testing.* If not, the physician should consider administering postexposure prophylaxis.

- **A person has direct contact (scratched or bitten) with a bat.***
- **Exposure should be assessed (by a medical provider or the health department) for the following:**
 - **A sleeping person waking up with a bat in the room.**
 - **A bat in the same room as a young child, a mentally disabled person, or an intoxicated person.**

You cannot get the rabies virus from bat feces, urine, or blood. You will not get rabies from touching the bat's fur, although a bat should never be handled with bare hands.

To capture a bat:

1. Collect the following materials: thick leather gloves, a small box or coffee can, cardboard sheet, and strong tape.
2. Put on leather work gloves.
3. Approach the bat slowly and place the container over it.
4. Slide the sheet of cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside.
5. Tape the cardboard to the container to secure the bat inside and punch small holes in the cardboard so that the bat can breathe. Contact a local veterinarian's office or animal control to submit the bat for testing.

Avoid damaging the bat's head during capturing as the brain must be intact to test for rabies.

For additional information please visit: <http://www.sdbwg.org/> or <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/index.html>

* The SD Public Health Lab in Pierre (**605-773-3368**) and the Animal Disease Research and Diagnostic Laboratory in Brookings (**605-688-5171**) are the only labs in SD approved for rabies virus testing.

CDC guidelines for rabies postexposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatment:

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5703a1.htm>

- Rabies PEP includes 1 dose of rabies immune globulin (20 IU/kg) and 4 doses of human diploid cell rabies vaccine (1mL, arm opposite Ig) administered in the arm on days 0, 3, 7, and 14, as soon after exposure as possible if not previously vaccinated (*day 0 is the day PEP is started*).
- For previously vaccinated persons, rabies PEP consists of 2 doses of the human diploid cell rabies vaccine (1mL) administered in the arm on days 0 and 3. Rabies immune globulin is not administered.
- The rabies virus is fatal without prompt treatment. It is imperative that rabies PEP be given prior to onset of symptoms.

Rabies consultations or additional information:

South Dakota Department of Health 800-592-1861 or 605-773-3737

