

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.

48 rabid bats reported in South Dakota from 2007-2016.

14 cases of human rabies caused by bats in the USA from 2006-2015 (none in South Dakota).

Bat species found in SD:

- Little brown bat
- Big brown bat
- Silver-haired bat
- Eastern red bat
- Hoary bat
- Townsend's big-eared bat
- Long-eared myotis
- Northern myotis
- Western small-footed myotis
- Fringe-tailed myotis
- Long-legged myotis

- If a person has direct contact with a bat, the bat should be captured and submitted for testing.* If the bat cannot be captured, treatment should be given to the patient.
- Exposure should also be considered if a person is in the same room as a bat and may be unaware of direct contact. Such instances include:
 - 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.
 - In these instances, the bat should be captured if at all possible and submitted for testing.* If not, the physician should consider administering postexposure prophylaxis.

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.

*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 South Dakota labs approved for rabies virus testing.

CDC guidelines for rabies postexposure prophylaxis treatment:

www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5703a1.htm

- Postexposure prophylaxis includes 1 dose of rabies immune globulin and 4 doses of human diploid cell rabies vaccine administered in the arm on days 0, 3, 7 and 14 as soon after exposure as possible.
- The rabies virus is fatal without prompt treatment. It is imperative that the rabies postexposure prophylaxis be given prior to onset of symptoms.

Rabies consultations or additional information:

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