

Rabies Facts

Dos and Don'ts



SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

There is no cure for rabies, but it is 100 percent preventable through prompt, appropriate medical care. Every year hundreds of South Carolinians must undergo preventive treatment for rabies due to exposure to a rabid or suspected rabid animal. Although the cost varies, post-exposure treatment typically exceeds \$10,000 per person.



Rabies Facts

- Rabies is caused by a deadly virus (*Lyssavirus*), and has a 99.9 percent fatality rate.
- Rabies is transmitted when saliva or neural tissue of an infected animal is introduced into the body of a healthy person or animal. Exposure can occur through a bite, scratch or contact with infected saliva to open wounds or mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose or mouth.
- Only mammals can get rabies. Birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians cannot.
- There are two types of rabies:
 1. Furious rabies: where the animal appears agitated, irritable, unpredictable and viciously aggressive.
 2. Dumb or paralytic rabies: where the animal has an inability to swallow, excessive salivation, drooping of jaw, stumbling, paralysis and coma.
- Once clinical signs of rabies appear, the disease is almost always fatal.

Rabies Dos

- **Do** stay a safe distance away from all wild animals, even if they seem tame or friendly. It is impossible to tell by appearance if an animal has rabies.
- **Do** educate children on why they should not handle wild or stray animals.
- **Do** wash wounds with soap and water, and immediately contact a health care provider.
- **Do** make sure your pets are current on their rabies vaccination. Keeping your pets up-to-date on their shots is one of the easiest and most effective ways you can protect yourself, your family and your pets from this fatal disease.

Rabies Don'ts

- **Don't** keep wild animals as pets. The primary carriers of rabies in South Carolina are raccoons, skunks, foxes and bats.
- **Don't** handle strays or wildlife with your bare hands. If you see an animal in need, contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator in your area. Do not approach the animal.
- **Don't** leave pet food or garbage outdoors, unless kept in properly sealed containers.
- **Don't** let pets roam freely. Keep pets safely confined to your property.