

Health Notification

World Rabies Day Clinical Reminders: Indications for Human Rabies Testing and Management of Animal Exposures in Philadelphia

October 1, 2018

In observance of World Rabies Day on Friday, 9/28, a global effort to increase awareness of rabies prevention and control, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) is sharing guidance on rule-out human rabies testing, and the management of animal exposures. Concurrently, following the recent identification of a Delaware resident with human rabies, PDPH has received an increase in human rabies testing requests and encourages area providers to become familiar with rule-out rabies testing guidance.

Criteria for Rule-Out Human Rabies Testing

Although rabies infection in humans is fatal, it is extremely rare and more common etiologies for acute, progressive encephalitis should be considered prior to requesting testing, including but not limited to: arboviruses (i.e., West Nile virus, Powassan virus), tickborne diseases, auto-immune encephalitis, HSV, HIV, enteroviruses, and listeriosis.

If human rabies is suspected:

- **Contact PDPH immediately** at 215-685-6742, or 215-686-4514 after hours and provide the following:
 - Clinical details, including timeline of illness and results of diagnostic testing
 - Exposure history, including animal exposures and/or recent organ transplant
- Timely reporting and complete exposure information is critical in initiating an investigation and finding the source of the outbreak.
- PDPH will provide approval for testing and will assist with testing coordination at CDC's Rabies Laboratory. Without this approval, testing at CDC may be delayed.
- For patients approved for rule-out rabies testing, all of the following specimens must be collected: **serum, cerebral spinal fluid, saliva, and a neck skin biopsy**. More information on specimen collection, storage, and transport can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/resources/specimen-submission-guidelines.html>
- Health care workers should wear gowns, goggles, masks, and gloves when caring for patients with viral encephalitis, particularly during intubation and suctioning, or when handling patient specimens. Report any breach in personal protective equipment to your facility's occupational health department.

Animal Exposure Reporting and Surveillance

- Report animal exposures (including bites, scratches, mucous membrane or open wound contact with animal saliva or brain material) and possible bat exposures to PDPH.
 - Obtain information on human victim and the animal, including its location
 - Report via telephone at 215-685-6748 or fax an exposure report form to 215-238-6947
<https://hip.phila.gov/Portals/default/HIP/ReportDisease/AnimalExposureReportingForm.pdf>
- If the animal location is known, PDPH and the Philadelphia Animal Care and Control Team will coordinate services to determine if the animal is rabid through a 10-day observation and confinement of healthy dogs, cats, or ferrets; OR rabies testing for wild mammals or unhealthy animals.
- **Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)** should be administered to patients with animal exposures (bites or non-bites) as soon as possible when:
 - The animal's location is unknown/uncertain
 - The animal tests positive for rabies
 - For dogs, cats, or ferrets that do not survive the 10-day quarantine and are not tested
 - Detailed Rabies PEP guidance by type of animal exposure is attached and can be found online at: <https://hip.phila.gov/Portals/default/HIP/DiseaseControlGuidance/AnimalBites/bitechart14final.pdf>

SUMMARY POINTS

- Report all suspect human rabies cases immediately to PDPH at 215-685-6742 (after hours: 215-686-4514).
 - Obtain animal, travel, and organ transplant exposures at patient intake
 - Test for more common causes of acute, progressive encephalitis
- Report all animal bites, scratches, and exposures to PDPH by telephone or fax.

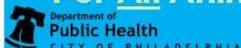
Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH)

Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Guidelines by Type of Animal

Type of Animal	Exposure	Location	Quarantine or Testing	Outcome	Rabies PEP [†]
 Dogs, Cats, & Ferrets	Any one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bite • Scratch (cat or ferret) • Animal saliva contact with open wound or mucous membrane 	Address where animal lives is known	10-Day quarantine for healthy animals: <i>Confine to home or Animal Care & Control Team (ACCT) shelter. PDPH will observe if owner & victim do not live together.</i>	Healthy after 10 days	Not Needed
			Rabies testing at PDPH for unhealthy animals: <i>Submit through ACCT or pet's veterinarian.</i>	Dies within 10 days & not tested	
 Bats	Any one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt or saw bat bite • Asleep or unconscious in room with bat • Child, mentally/physically disabled adult or intoxicated person in room with bat 	Location known & bat captured: <i>Call ACCT at (267) 385-3800 to have bat captured & delivered to PDPH.</i>	Submit bat for rabies testing at PDPH: <i>PEP may be started if rabies testing cannot be performed within 48 hours.</i>	Bat tests <u>negative</u> for rabies.	Not Needed / Discontinue PEP
		Unknown location / Not captured or tested		Bat tests <u>positive</u> for rabies.	
	None of the above				
 Wild Animals	Raccoons, skunks, foxes, groundhogs, & most other wild mammals*: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bite • Scratch • Animal saliva contact with open wound or mucous membrane 	Location known & animal captured: <i>Call ACCT at (267) 385-3800 to have animal captured & delivered to PDPH.</i>	Submit animal for rabies testing at PDPH: <i>PEP may be started if rabies testing cannot be performed within 48 hours.</i>	Animal tests <u>negative</u> for rabies.	Not Needed / Discontinue PEP
		Unknown location / Not captured or tested		Animal tests <u>positive</u> for rabies.	

[†]Rabies PEP: For previously unvaccinated, healthy persons, administer rabies immunoglobulin (day 0) & 4 doses of rabies vaccine (days 0, 3, 7, & 14). PDPH also will notify the victim about whether or not rabies PEP is needed. Additional guidance, PEP series schedules, vaccine ordering information, & reporting forms are available at: <https://hip.phila.gov>.

For All Animal Exposures, Report Human Victim & Animal Information Including Location to PDPH:



Telephone: (215) 685-6748 | Fax: (215) 238-6947 | <https://hip.phila.gov>

Message #: PDPH-HAN-00276N-10-01-18

Philadelphia Department of Public Health

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215-685-6740 (phone) • 215-686-4514 (after hours) • 215-238-6947 (fax) • www.phila.gov/health/DiseaseControl • hip.phila.gov