What to Expect With Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

NYC Health

Rabies is a fatal disease spread through the bite of a rabies-infected animal. If you were bitten* by an animal that had or is suspected of having rabies, you may need to receive rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Rabies is completely preventable with proper PEP.†

What is rabies PEP?

- Rabies PEP includes one dose of human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) and four doses of rabies vaccine given over two weeks. HRIG provides immediate protection while the vaccine helps your body's immune system fight the virus.
- If you were previously vaccinated against rabies (you received rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis or rabies PEP for an earlier animal bite or exposure) rabies PEP will include two doses of rabies vaccine given over three days without HRIG.

Bring this fact sheet with you when you go to the emergency room and use the checklist as a reference. If you or your health care provider have any questions or concerns about HRIG, the rabies vaccine or how they are being administered, call the **New York City (NYC) Health Department** at **347-665-7955**.

Remember, you are the best advocate for your health and the health of your loved ones. For more information about rabies in NYC, visit **nyc.gov/health/rabies**.

The NYC Health Department does not cover the cost of the rabies vaccine. Speak with your provider and health insurance company about coverage. For more information about low- or no-cost health care options, visit **nychealthandhospitals.org/hospitals** to contact an NYC Health + Hospitals location, or call **311**.

*Rabies PEP may also be recommended if you were exposed to rabies because you had a fresh wound or mucous membrane (mouth, eyes or nose) that may have been contaminated with saliva from a rabid animal, or you were possibly bitten by a bat.

†Harmful side effects to rabies vaccines and HRIG are not common. Minor reactions to rabies vaccines may include pain, redness, swelling or itching at the injection site. Rarely, symptoms such as headache, nausea, abdominal pain, muscle aches and dizziness have been reported. Pain at the injection site and low-grade fever may follow HRIG treatment.

For people who have never received rabies vaccination	
Immediate Wound Care	❑ Clean and gently rinse out the wound(s) for 15 minutes to help remove dirt and germs. ❑ Consider a tetanus shot if it has been more than 10 years since your last shot. ❑ Consult your doctor who will decide how to best treat serious injuries that require medication, stitches or surgery.
Day 0 *The day you receive your first rabies vaccine is counted as day 0.*	❑ **Human Rabies Immune Globulin** (**HRIG**) • **HRIG** is given according to your weight. The higher a person's weight, the larger the dose. • **HRIG** should be injected into and around the wound(s). Any remaining **HRIG** should be injected into a larger muscle like an arm, buttock or thigh. • **HRIG** should not be given in the same site as the rabies vaccine. ❑ **Rabies Vaccine #1** • The first dose of rabies vaccine should not be given in the same site where **HRIG** was injected. • **All doses of rabies vaccine should be injected in an arm muscle. For children, the thigh muscle can also be used.**
Day 3	❑ **Rabies Vaccine #2** • All other doses of rabies vaccine can be given where **HRIG** was injected on **day 0**.
Day 7	❑ **Rabies Vaccine #3**
Day 14	❑ **Rabies Vaccine #4**
Day 28	❑ **Rabies Vaccine #5** • May be given **only** to people with weakened immune systems.

NOTE: Deviations of a few days from this recommended schedule are fine. Patients who are two or three days late (or early) for their next rabies shot should continue the series and keep the recommended spacing between doses.

For people previously vaccinated for rabies‡	
Immediate Wound Care	❑ Clean and gently rinse out the wound(s) for 15 minutes to help remove dirt and germs. ❑ Consider a tetanus shot if it has been more than 10 years since your last shot. ❑ Consult your doctor who will decide how best to treat serious injuries that require medication, stitches or surgery.
Day 0 *The day you receive your first rabies vaccine is counted as day 0.*	❑ **Rabies Vaccine #1** • **All doses of rabies vaccine should be injected in an arm muscle. For children, the thigh muscle can also be used.**
Day 3	❑ **Rabies Vaccine #2**

‡Includes people who received rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis, such as veterinarians and animal control workers, or anyone who received rabies PEP for a previous animal bite or rabies exposure.