

Rabies Risk

Rabies is a highly infectious but preventable viral disease that affects all mammals and is most often transmitted through a bite of a rabid animal. The vast majority of rabies cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) occur in wild animals like raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes. Each year Mississippi identifies bats with rabies but has only identified one case of land animal rabies in the state since 1961. Once symptoms of the disease develop, rabies is nearly always fatal, so prevention is of key importance.



For more information about Rabies:
<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/> or
http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,142.html



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Developed in conjunction with OCH Infection Control

Rabies

Rabies, a virus that attacks the nervous system and is fatal once symptoms develop, is passed to humans through bites and scratches from infected animals.

How rabies virus travels

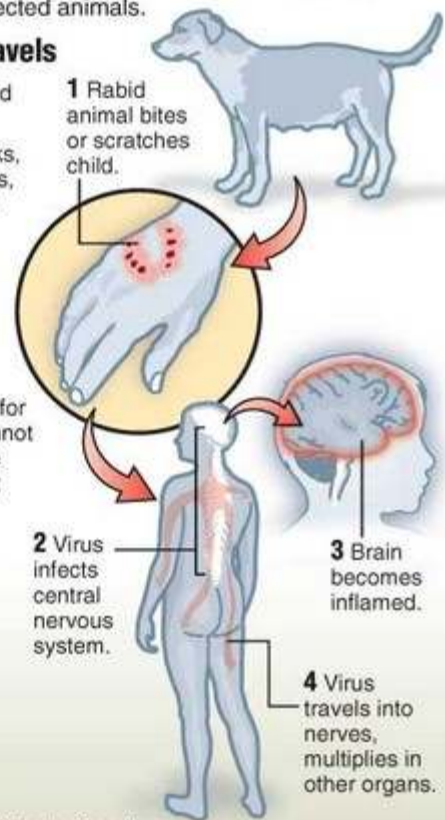
- Spread through infected animal's saliva.
- Occurs mainly in skunks, raccoons, foxes and bats, who can infect domestic cats, dogs, livestock.
- Incubation period in humans is about two months.

Treatment

- If animal tests positive for the virus or if animal cannot be tested, person will be given vaccine to prevent rabies from developing.
- If needed, vaccine should be given soon after exposure.

Prevention

- Make sure pets have current rabies shots.
- Keep pets in fenced yard or on a leash outside the home.



Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Graphic: Pat Carr, Garrick Gibson

MCT

All mammals are susceptible to rabies, but only a few species are significant reservoirs for the disease. These include domestic animals such as cats and dogs as well as wild animals such as raccoons, skunks, bats, foxes, and coyotes. Bats are of the greatest concern in Mississippi. Any exposure to a bat, even if no clear evidence of a bite is found, is considered a high risk exposure to potential rabies,

MANAGING PATIENTS WITH ANIMAL BITE:

Rodents (mice, squirrels, chipmunks, etc.) are not known to be reservoirs of Rabies in our region. The Health Department can help assess the risk of Rabies exposure depending on the type of animal and the animal's condition. If Rabies post-exposure treatment is indicated, the hospital (or clinic) is responsible for providing the treatment. The Health Dept. serves an advisory role in the process.

For expert consultation on how to manage a patient with animal bite, call (601) 576-7725
After-hours, call (601) 576-7400