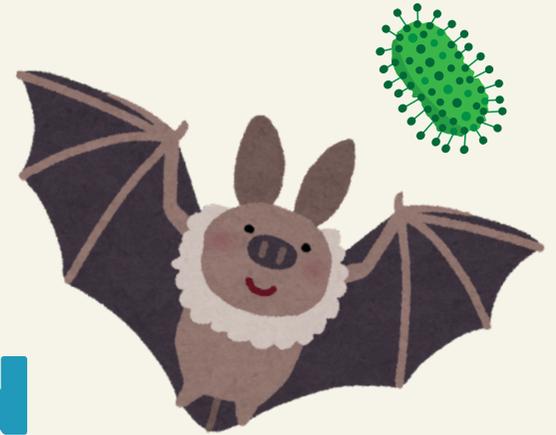


# STAY SAFE

## RABIES PREVENTION FOR EDUCATORS

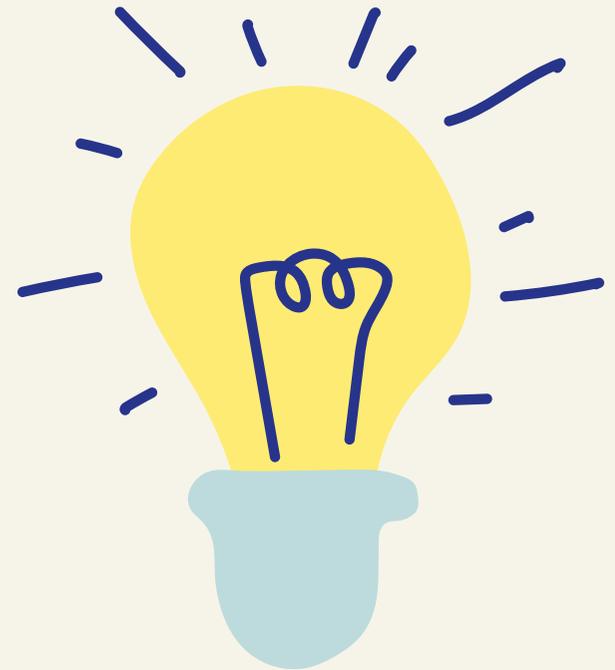


Washington State Department of  
**HEALTH**



# OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- What is rabies?
- How do you get rabies?
- Rabies treatment
- Rabies in WA state
- How can I prevent rabies?
- Preventing rabies at school
- Case studies
- Responding to bat exposure



# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose

Prevent rabies exposures at school and at home through education and awareness

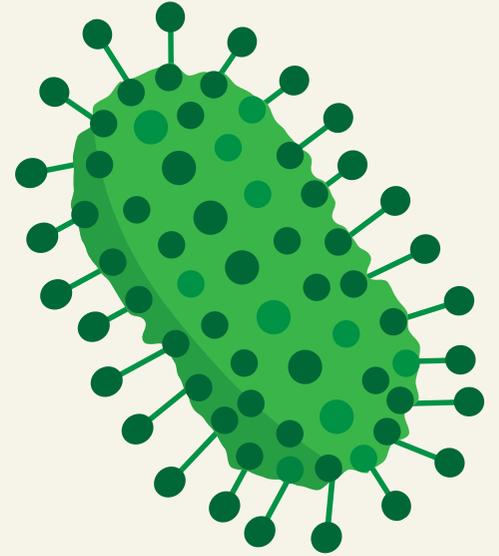
## Learning Goals

- How to prevent and minimize bat exposures
- How to respond if a student or staff interacts with a bat
- Understand your resources



# WHAT IS RABIES?

- Rabies is a viral disease, caused by an RNA virus (Lyssavirus)
- All warm-blooded animals can get rabies
- Non-mammals like birds and reptiles do not get rabies
- Rabies disease is almost always fatal in humans



# HOW DO YOU GET RABIES?

- Rabies virus enters the body through broken skin caused by a bite or scratch from an infected animal OR
- Direct contact of broken skin or mucous membranes with infectious material (saliva, cerebrospinal fluid, nervous system tissue)
- The virus cannot penetrate intact skin
- The virus is not transmitted by contact with blood, urine, or feces



# HOW CAN I PREVENT RABIES?

- Rabies disease can be prevented if treatment is given after possible exposure and before symptoms appear.
- Both pre-exposure and post exposure prophylaxis (treatment) are available
  - Pre-exposure vaccines are only recommended for people in occupations with frequent risk of exposure, like people who work with wildlife, or certain travelers.
- Ensure your pets are vaccinated against rabies and remain up to date on shots



# RABIES IN WA STATE

- All mammals can get rabies, but in Washington state bats are the only known source of rabies.
- 3-8% of bats tested in WA are rabies positive
  - This oversamples bats with human/animal interaction, which are more likely to be rabid
  - 2 human cases of rabies in WA in the past 75 years
- Updated rabies testing data for Washington: [Rabies Activity in Washington | Washington State Department of Health](#)
- Historical rabies testing data for Washington 1988-2024: <https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-04/BatsTestedByCounty2019-2024.pdf>



**Big Brown Bat**



**California myotis (bat)**

# PREVENTING RABIES AT SCHOOL

- Children should **never** handle unfamiliar animals – wild or domestic – even if they appear friendly.
- Teach kids to tell an adult if they find a bat or other unfamiliar animal.
- Do not handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans, uncovered compost bins, or pet food left outside.



# CASE STUDY

A kindergarten student reported to their teacher they had found a bat in the library and reported touching it. Other students reported seeing the bat and said it was dead.

The janitor was able to obtain the bat in the same location as described by the students. Staff then contacted their local health jurisdiction (LHJ) for guidance on next steps.

The bat was dead at the time it was discovered. The LHJ recommended that the bat be submitted for rabies testing and assisted in getting the bat to the WADOH Public Health Laboratory (PHL). Unfortunately, the bat was unsatisfactory for testing due to decomposition of brain tissue.



# CASE STUDY CON'T



The LHJ followed up with the school and talked to the student who found and touched the bat. They worked with the school to develop a list of all other students or staff who may have been at risk, based on their class schedule or known location.

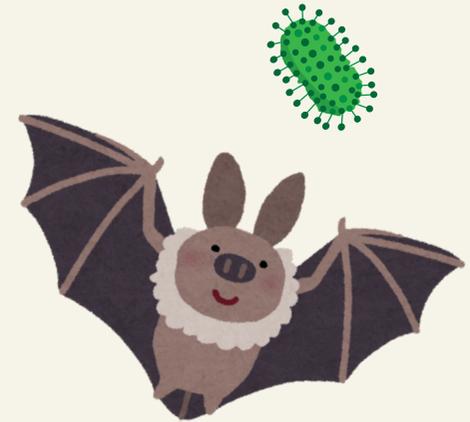
Fortunately, the student who reported touching the bat only reported touching the wings and fur, and endorsed no contact with teeth, mouth parts or claws. None of the other students who reported seeing the bat reported touching or handling the bat.

Even though the kindergartner who found the bat reported only touching the bat's wings, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) was recommended. If we cannot reliably determine if a child was bitten or scratched, or if they may have had contact with teeth or claws, PEP is recommended. In this case, the child was too young to reliably report. The school worked with the LHJ to send a letter to parents of students identified as possibly at risk, to encourage them to ask their child about possible bat contact and discuss PEP with their healthcare provider.



# RESPONDING TO BAT EXPOSURE

- Provide basic first aid immediately if needed. Wash any wounds thoroughly with soap and running water. Refer to the “Animal Bites and Scratches” section of the Infectious Disease Control Guide for School Staff
- Contact your local health jurisdiction as soon as possible ([Washington State Local Health Jurisdictions](#) | [Washington State Department of Health](#))
- Any potential human exposure to a bat requires careful assessment because bat teeth are sharp and tiny, so a bite wound might not be noticed.
- Administration of rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) following exposure to a rabid animal is considered a medical urgency, not an emergency.



Scan to  
locate your  
local health  
jurisdiction



# RESOURCES

**WA DOH Rabies  
Resources**



**CDC Rabies  
Information**



**WA DOH Infectious  
Disease Control  
Guide for Schools**



**Infectious Disease  
Control Guide for  
School Staff**



# OTHER TOOLS IN THIS KIT

## BATS & RABIES



Rabies presentation for  
K-12 Students

### I FOUND A BAT! WHAT DO I DO?



#### ABOUT RABIES

Bats in Washington can carry rabies. People can get infected with rabies by being bitten or scratched by an infected bat. If a person does not receive the appropriate medical care after a potential rabies exposure, infection with the virus is almost always fatal. Timely treatment after an exposure prevents rabies infection. Any potential human exposure to a bat requires careful assessment as a bite wound can go unnoticed due to bats' tiny but sharp teeth. Bats that are captured can be humanely euthanized, if needed, and tested for rabies to inform treatment decisions.

#### WHEN YOU FIND A BAT

**Contain the bat** where others cannot come into contact with it (close windows and doors to the room). If possible, place a heavy box or bucket over the bat. If the bat is dead, wear gloves and use a shovel or other tool to double-bag the bat.



**Identify** any students or staff who may have had contact with the bat. Record the details of each possible exposure to share with your local health jurisdiction. These details will be important in determining if an exposure occurred.

**Provide basic first aid** immediately if needed. Wash any wounds thoroughly with soap and running water. Refer to the "Animal Bites and Scratches" section of the Infectious Disease Control Guide for School Staff.



**Contact your local health department** to determine if the bat needs to be tested for rabies and if any student or staff should receive post-exposure treatment.



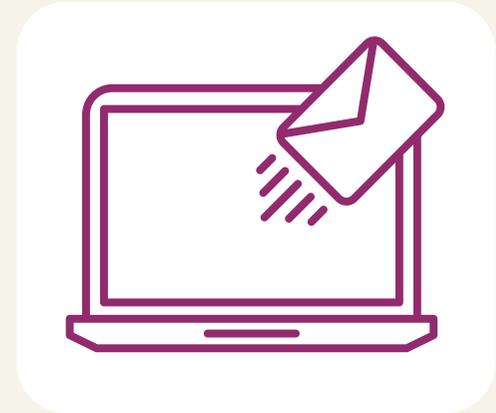
**Consider notifying parents** that a bat was discovered at the school, if their student may have had contact with the bat, or if the bat is being tested for rabies to encourage them to ask their children if they touched a bat at school.



For more information, visit [doh.wa.gov](http://doh.wa.gov), DSH 000-000, February 2025. To request this document in another format, call 1-800-925-0227. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 713 (Washington Relay) or email [doh.information@doh.wa.gov](mailto:doh.information@doh.wa.gov).

What to do if you  
find a bat poster

Suspected rabies  
exposure letter to  
parents template



**THANK YOU!**  
**ANY QUESTIONS?**



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