



Animal Bites/Scratches And Rabies

What Happens When You've Been Bitten or Scratched By An Animal?

Any time a human is involved with an animal bite and/or scratch, follow up of the incident will be made to ensure the person did not contract rabies at the time of the bite/scratch.

Any person (including physician, police officer, or veterinarian) who knows of an animal biting/scratching incident *has a legal duty to report the incident to Public Health*. A Public Health Inspector will then contact the person exposed.

How Can Rabies Transmission Be Ruled Out?

Not all animals can carry and transmit rabies. If the animal involved is a domestic pet, Public Health will follow up with the animal owner and have them observe the animal for Ten (10) days. If the animal is alive and well at the end of the Ten (10) days, there is no chance of rabies transmission to the person at the time of the bite/scratch.

If the animal is a stray or cannot be found, it cannot be assessed for rabies. Treatment for the person exposed may be necessary.

What Happens Next?

Public Health will be contacting you to discuss the incident. If you do not hear from Public Health within Two (2) business days of the biting incident, contact the Health Protection Department at 519-631-9900. A Public Health Inspector will help determine what course of action is required.

The decision to proceed with post-exposure rabies treatment should be made in consultation with a physician. If rabies vaccine is required, it will be supplied free of charge by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care via Public Health and administered by a physician.

Where Can I Get More Information?

Information on rabies and rabies vaccinations can be found on Elgin St. Thomas Public Health's website at www.elginhealth.on.ca/rabies. Fact sheets are also available at the Health Unit and you can talk to a Public Health Inspector by calling the Health Protection Department.

For more information contact:

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*Health Protection Department
(519) 631-9900*