

Important Information about Treatment for Rabies after Exposure

What is rabies?

- Rabies is a virus that attacks the brain and nerves, and can cause death.
- Once you are sick with rabies, there is no way to stop the disease. People usually die 7-10 days after getting sick so it is very important to be treated quickly.

How do you get rabies?

- Most people get rabies when they are bitten by an animal that has rabies. This is called 'exposure to' or 'being exposed to' rabies.
- Some of the animals in Marin County that could expose you to rabies are bats, wild cats, skunks, foxes, raccoons, and coyotes. Livestock can also get rabies.

What is the treatment for rabies exposure?

- There are two medications that help the human body kill the rabies virus after a person is exposed:
 - 1) Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG)
 - 2) Rabies vaccine
- This treatment is called Post Exposure Prophylactic, or PEP for short. So far, every person who has received this treatment has not gotten sick with rabies.
- The treatment is given through injections (shots), usually in the arm for adults and thigh for children.
- If you have the treatment within 7 days of the exposure, you will receive both HRIG and the rabies vaccine on the first day. Then you will receive the rabies vaccine on the 3rd, 7th and 14th days after the first day of treatment. If you are treated later than 7 days after exposure, you will receive only the rabies vaccine on the 1st, 3rd, 7th, and 14th days.
- Treatment for rabies should begin very soon after exposure to rabies, especially if bitten near the head or neck.

Could there be side effects from the rabies treatment?

The treatment has been used since 1980 and is considered safe and effective. Minor pain, itching or swelling may occur where the injections (shots) are given. A few people experience headaches, nausea, abdominal pain, muscle aches and dizziness for a short time. No side effects have been reported as permanent.

Who should NOT receive rabies medications?

There are NO health conditions that should stop you from getting PEP. Pregnant women can receive PEP. Tell your doctor if you have any food allergies before starting PEP.

Please speak with your doctor if you have questions or call our office at (415) 473-4163, Monday – Friday 8:30am – 5:00pm.