



Sedgwick County...
working for you

Rabies

What is rabies?

Rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. Many wild animals and domestic animals are rabid. Skunks and bats are the most common animals to have rabies in Kansas. Rabbits, mice, rats, squirrels, opossums and chipmunks are rarely infected and their bites rarely call for treatment.

What are the symptoms of rabies in humans?

The early signs of rabies can be fever or headache. This changes quickly to nervous system symptoms, such as inability to sleep, uneasiness and confusion, slight or partial loss of muscle function, hallucinations, agitation, excessive drooling, difficulty swallowing, and fear of water. Once someone with rabies infection starts having these symptoms, the individual usually does not survive. This is why it is very important to talk to your doctor or health care provider right away if any animal bites you, especially a wild animal.

How soon do symptoms appear after infection occurs?

It may take several weeks or even a few years for people to show symptoms after getting infected with rabies. People usually start to show signs of the disease 1 to 3 months after infection.

How long is rabies contagious?

In dogs, cats and ferrets, rabies is contagious as soon as the animals show symptoms. Rabies is contagious in animals throughout the illness until death. Humans are infectious throughout clinical illness.

For More Information:

Sedgwick County Health Department
660-7300

Sedgwick County Web site
www.sedgwickcounty.org

How is rabies spread?

People usually get rabies from the bite of a rabid animal. Many animals, such as dogs, cats, and horses are vaccinated against rabies, but you should always wash any bite thoroughly and check with your health care provider about what to do if any animal bites you.

It is also possible, but quite rare, that people might get rabies if infectious material from a rabid animal, such as saliva, gets directly into their eyes, nose, mouth or a wound.

Non-bite exposures to rabies are very rare. Scratches or abrasions contaminated with saliva from a rabid animal constitute non-bite exposures. Other contact, such as petting a rabid animal or contact with the blood, urine or feces of a rabid animal, does not constitute an exposure.

How is rabies treated?

Medical assistance should be obtained as soon as possible after an exposure. Specific medical attention for someone exposed is "post-exposure prophylaxis." This is a series of one dose of immune globulin and five doses of rabies vaccine over a 28 day period.

How can you prevent rabies?

- Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs, cats and ferrets. This not only protects your pets, but also provides protection to you.
- Keep your pets under supervision to avoid contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a stray or wild animal, seek veterinary assistance immediately.
- Call your local Animal Control to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood.
- Avoid contact with unfamiliar animals. Teach children not to handle or pet unfamiliar animals, even if they appear friendly.
- Do not try to nurse sick, stray animals to health. If you live within the city limits of Wichita, contact Animal Services at 268-8378. If you live outside Wichita, in Sedgwick County, contact Animal Control at 660-7070.