



# Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Administration: A Quick Reference for Healthcare Providers

ADH Zoonotic Disease Section Public Health Fact Sheet

## Handling Animal Bites: Locate the Animal and Wait

1. The patient care priorities are wound care, confirmation of tetanus vaccination, and determining if the animal is available to be quarantined or euthanized and tested for rabies.
2. It is safe to allow at least three days from the date of the bite for the animal to be located if it is not already captured. Notify the local animal control agency or equivalent AND the county health department for assistance.
3. If the animal is a dog or cat, it can be observed until 10 days after the bite to confirm it was not contagious with rabies when the bite occurred. Farm animals (cow, horse, sheep, etc.) and exotic animals (tiger, bear, etc.) will be observed for 30 days from the bite. The county health department sanitarian or animal control officer will determine if quarantine can occur on the animal owner's property or needs to occur at a veterinarian's clinic or animal control facility.
4. If the biting animal is a skunk, bat, or other wild carnivore, the animal should be submitted to the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) Public Health Laboratory (PHL) for rabies testing.
5. **Rabies PEP is NOT usually indicated while the animal is in quarantine or rabies testing is pending, unless the bite was unusually vicious and occurred on the head or neck.**

What	When	How
<p><b>Rabies Vaccine</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patients who have never received any form of rabies vaccine will receive FOUR doses of the rabies vaccine.*</li> <li>• Patients who have previously received rabies PEP or pre-exposure vaccination should only receive TWO doses of the rabies vaccine.</li> <li>• The dose is 1.0 mL given IM.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The four-dose schedule is given on days 0, 3, 7, and 14*.</li> <li>• The two-dose schedule (for previously vaccinated patients, if given in the U.S. after 1985) is given on days 0 and 3.</li> <li>• Day 0 is the day of the first dose of vaccine, NOT the day of the bite or exposure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rabies vaccine is given IM in the deltoid muscle of most patients; the anterolateral thigh muscle is an acceptable injection site for very young children.</li> <li>• <i>If the vaccine is given in the gluteal area, it is not considered a valid dose, and the vaccine dose should be repeated as soon as possible, given IM in the deltoid.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a crucial component of the rabies PEP regimen for patients not previously immunized against rabies.</li> <li>• The HRIG dose is 20 IU/kg.</li> <li>• <u>Exception:</u> HRIG is NOT given if the patient has previously received rabies PEP or rabies pre-exposure vaccination (if given in U.S. after 1985).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give HRIG as early as possible, i.e., at same time as Day 0 OR Day 3 vaccine dose. HRIG can be administered up to Day 7 following rabies vaccination.</li> <li>• After Day 7 of the vaccine series, if HRIG was not given, it is no longer indicated because it will suppress the immune response to the rabies vaccine.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infiltrate the area of the bite with as much HRIG as is anatomically feasible, even if the bite is healing.</li> <li>• Inject the remaining HRIG in a <b>different injection site</b>, such as the arm or thigh, <b>on the opposite side of the body</b> from the vaccine dose.</li> <li>• HRIG should not be administered in the same syringe as the vaccine, or at the same site as the vaccine.</li> </ul>

\*A fifth dose on day 28 is only indicated for immunosuppressed patients.

## Administering Rabies PEP

1. If you have a question about whether rabies PEP needs to be initiated, please reference the risk assessment decision tree and other healthcare provider resources on our website. If you still need a consult, you may email [adh.zoonotic@arkansas.gov](mailto:adh.zoonotic@arkansas.gov) or contact the ADH Zoonotic Disease Section at (501) 661-2381.
2. If it has been determined that your patient meets criteria for rabies exposure, AND the biting animal tested positive for rabies or is unavailable for capture, quarantine, or testing, follow these important instructions for ensuring appropriate rabies PEP:
  - a. Administer both components of the PEP regimen (unless the patient meets the exception for HRIG).
  - b. Explain the vaccine schedule to the patient—make advance appointments for each dose and give the patient a calendar schedule for additional rabies vaccine doses.
  - c. Inject as much HRIG as safely possible around the area of the bite; give remaining volume in a site on the opposite side of the body from the vaccine dose, if possible.
  - d. Administer the rabies vaccine in the DELTOID muscle of adults and older children; anterolateral thigh is acceptable for very small children.

**For more information call or visit us on the web:**

Phone: 501-661-2381 <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/rabies>

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