

Rabies

Cause of Illness

Rabies is a disease that affects the central nervous system and almost always progresses to death. Rabies disease is caused by the rabies virus.

Rabies disease occurs worldwide and usually results from the bite of an infected animal. Raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes, and bats are the most important potential source of infections for humans and domestic animals in the United States. In Colorado, rabies is usually associated with infected bats.

Symptoms

- Apprehension
- Headache
- Fever
- Anxiety
- Difficulty swallowing
- Seizures and possible paralysis

Cases are almost always fatal after onset of symptoms.

Transmission

Transmission of rabies usually occurs through the bite of an infected animal. The virus is present in saliva and is transmitted through a bite or rarely by contamination of mucosa or skin lesions by infectious material.

Incubation Period

Averages 4-6 weeks but can be longer
Than 1 year.

Prevention and Control

Prevention of rabies includes immunization of dogs, cats, ferrets, and other household pets that could potentially be infected with rabies.

Avoid contact with wild or unfamiliar animals. Detain any animal known to have bitten a person and observe for 10 days.

If bitten by an animal, clean the wound thoroughly, and seek medical attention immediately. Your health care provider will work closely with public health officials to determine if preventative treatment for rabies is necessary.

Treatment

Treatment for any communicable disease should always be done in consultation with your health care provider.

Treatment of rabies consists of rabies vaccine and rabies immune globulin after an animal bite. Once symptoms have developed, the only treatment is intensive supportive care.

Resources

www.cdc.gov

Click on "Diseases and Conditions" and select the disease of interest.