

Rabies



Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Guide

Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis, or PEP, is recommended

if a person was bitten by or had a high-risk exposure to:

1. A rabies-positive animal
2. A rabies vector species (bat, raccoon, skunk) that is unavailable for testing

PEP is **NOT** recommended if a person was bitten by a dog or cat that can be observed for 10 days. Contact the local health department to file a bite report or for help with locating/observing domestic animals.

Consult Tennessee Department of Health if you are unsure if PEP is indicated.

Rabies PEP is available at emergency departments in Tennessee and is not offered at health departments. Visit the TDH website for a list of facilities that typically have PEP available: <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/zoonotic-diseases/rabies.html>. TDH recommends calling ahead to ensure the facility has PEP in stock before visiting.

The standard PEP regimen for non-immunized, immunocompetent persons includes administration of human rabies immune globulin, or HRIG, and the rabies vaccination series:

1

Wound cleansing

- Clean wound(s) immediately with soap and water.
- If possible, thoroughly irrigate with anti-virus agent, like povidone-iodine.
- Provide additional wound care as necessary.

2

HRIG

Administer 20 IU/kg body weight dose on day 0*

- Infiltrate HRIG in and around the wound area. Give any remaining HRIG IM in a site distant from the vaccine. If there is no wound (i.e. bat found in sleeping room), administer HRIG in quadriceps or deltoids.
- Do NOT inject HRIG and vaccine at the same site or inject HRIG into the gluteus.
- HRIG can be given up to (and including) day 7 in the PEP regimen. If given more than 7 days after rabies vaccine, HRIG can interfere with the immune response.

3

Vaccine

Administer 1.0 mL dose on days 0, 3, 7 and 14**

- Administer vaccine IM in the deltoid area of adults or anterolateral thigh of young children.
- Do NOT inject HRIG and vaccine at the same site or inject vaccine into the gluteus.

*The first day of the PEP treatment regimen is designated as day 0.

**Vaccination schedule deviations of a few days are not a great concern and the patient should resume the series. Titers may be drawn to evaluate immune response. Consult TDH if there are significant schedule deviations.

Special Considerations



Immunocompromised persons receive a fifth vaccination on day 28 and should be tested for seroconversion 7 to 14 days following completion of PEP.



Children can be given vaccine in the anterolateral thigh and should receive the same weight-based dose of HRIG as adults (20 IU/kg).



Pregnant women can follow the standard PEP regimen.



Previously vaccinated persons who have received a complete regimen of either pre- or post-exposure rabies prophylaxis receive only two rabies vaccine boosters on days 0 and 3 and SHOULD NOT receive HRIG.



Uninsured or underinsured persons may be eligible for patient assistance programs that provide rabies vaccine and immune globulin at reduced or zero cost. Learn more by contacting the vaccine manufacturer and your healthcare provider.

