

# Communicable Disease Newsletter

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## RABIES

Rabies is a deadly virus spread to people from the saliva of infected animals. Once a person begins showing signs and symptoms of rabies, the disease is nearly always fatal. For that reason, anyone who may have a risk of contracting rabies should receive rabies vaccines for protection.

### **Causes**

Rabies infection is caused by the rabies virus. The virus is spread through the saliva of infected animals. Infected animals can spread the virus by biting another animal or a person. In rare cases, rabies can be spread when infected saliva gets into an open wound or the mucous membranes, such as the mouth or eyes. This could occur if an infected animal were to lick an open cut on your skin.

### **Animals that can transmit the rabies virus**

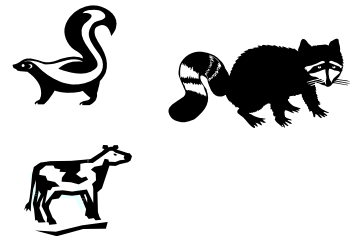
Any mammal can transmit the rabies virus. The animals most likely to transmit the rabies virus to people include:

#### Pets and farm animals

- Bats
- Cows
- Dogs
- Goats
- Ferrets
- Rabbits
- Horses
- Cats

#### Wild animals

- Skunks
- Beavers
- Coyotes
- Foxes
- Woodchucks
- Monkeys
- Raccoons



There has never been a documented case of human-to-human rabies transmission.

### **Symptoms**

Rabies doesn't cause any signs or symptoms until late in the disease, often just days before death. Signs and symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Excessive salivation
- Hallucinations
- Fear of water (hydrophobia) because of the difficulty in swallowing
- Difficulty swallowing
- Headache
- Agitation
- Partial paralysis
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Confusion

### **When to see a doctor**

Seek immediate medical care if you're bitten by any animal. Based on your injuries and the situation in which the bite occurred, you and your doctor can decide whether you should receive treatment to prevent rabies.

Even if you aren't sure whether you've been bitten, seek medical attention. For instance, a bat that flies into your room while you're sleeping may bite you without waking you. If you awake to find a bat in your room, assume you've been bitten. Also, if you find a bat near a person who can't report a bite, such as a small child or a person with a disability, assume that person has been bitten.

### **What you can do in the meantime**

Wash your wound gently and thoroughly with soap and generous amounts of water. This may help wash away the virus.

If the animal that bit you can be contained or captured without causing more injury, do so. Do not kill the animal with a blow or a shot to the head, as the resulting injuries may make it difficult to perform laboratory tests to determine whether the animal has rabies.

Tell your doctor that you have captured the animal that bit you. Your doctor may then contact the local health department to determine what to do with the animal.

### **Treatment for people bitten by animals with rabies**

If you've been bitten by an animal that is known to have rabies, you'll receive a series of shots to prevent the rabies virus from infecting you. If the animal that bit you can't be found, it may be safest to assume that the animal has rabies. But this will depend on several factors, such as the type of animal and the situation in which the bite occurred.

Rabies shots include:

A fast-acting shot (rabies immune globulin) to prevent the virus from infecting you. Part of this injection is given near the area where the animal bit you, as soon as possible after the bite.

A series of rabies vaccines to help your body learn to identify and fight the rabies virus. Rabies vaccines are given as injections in your arm. You receive four injections over 14 days.

Source: mayoclinic.com

# INFLUENZA

**Influenza** (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by various influenza viruses. Most often, the “flu” is spread by direct contact with droplets transferred from one person to another through coughing, sneezing and talking. Flu viruses can also be spread by touching surfaces or objects with flu virus on them and then touching one’s own mouth, eyes, or nose. The flu can cause mild to severe illness, and even death. Each year in the United States, up to 20% of the population is infected with influenza accounting for greater than 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 related deaths.

## **Signs & Symptoms**

It is possible for a sick individual to infect others before showing signs and symptoms of illness. Healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days **after** becoming ill. Adults and children with weakened immune systems may be able to infect others for an even longer period of time. Signs and symptoms of flu infection include:

- fever (not everyone with flu will have a fever)
- chills
- dry cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- fatigue (very tired)
- vomiting and diarrhea (this is more common in children than adults)



## **Cold vs. Flu**

It is important not to confuse a common cold with the flu, although differentiating between the two may be difficult. In general, common colds are usually milder than the flu. Flu symptoms such as fever, body aches, extreme tiredness, and dry cough are usually more common and intense. Common colds generally do not result in hospitalization or cause serious health problems such as pneumonia or bacterial infections. Due to the fact that colds and flu share many symptoms, it can be difficult (or even impossible) to tell the difference based on symptoms alone. It is very important to contact your healthcare provider at the onset of illness.

## **Prevention**

The best way to prevent the flu is to receive a flu vaccination. The viruses which can cause illness change from season to season, so it is important to get vaccinated every year. During the 2009-2010 flu season, the 2009 H1N1 virus spread worldwide causing the first flu pandemic in more than 40 years. Just as in prior years, the 2011-2012 flu vaccine will offer protection against 3 different flu viruses, including 2009 H1N1. There are 2 different types of flu vaccine available:

**The “flu shot”** is an inactivated (dead) vaccine and is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older, including healthy people, people with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women

**The “nasal spray”** is a live, weakened vaccine and is approved for use in people 2-49 years of age in the absence of pregnancy and chronic medical conditions

Full antibody protection develops against influenza virus infections about two weeks after vaccination. It is important to remember that flu vaccination will not cause flu infection or stop any infectious process already in progress.

Yearly flu vaccination should begin in September, or as soon as vaccine is available, and continue throughout the flu season. The flu season can begin early as October with seasonal flu activity peaking in January or later. You should contact your healthcare provider to receive the flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available.



**Flu vaccine is also available at the Saginaw County Department of Public Health for individuals 6 months of age and older. For more information call (989) 758-3840 or visit [www.saginawpublichealth.org](http://www.saginawpublichealth.org).**

Source: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). Morbidity & Mortality Weekly (MMWR). Prevention and Control of Influenza With Vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) 2011; August 26, 2011, 60(33), 1128-1132.

**COMMUNICABLE DISEASE  
REPORTED FOR SAGINAW COUNTY  
FOR THE QUARTER  
07/1/2011 – 09/30/2011**

Disease	No. Reported
ANIMAL BITE	22
CAMPYLOBACTER	<5
CHLAMYDIA (Genital)	327
CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS	<5
FLU-LIKE DISEASE	443
GASTROINTESTINAL ILLNESS	222
GIARDIASIS	<5
GONORRHEA	33
HEAD LICE	65
HEPATITIS A	<5
HEPATITIS B CHRONIC	<5
HEPATITIS C ACUTE	<5
HEPATITIS C CHRONIC	27
<b>INFLUENZA</b>	<b>0</b>
LEGIONELLOSIS	<5
MENINGITIS-ASEPTIC	11
<b>RABIES</b>	<b>0</b>
SALMONELLOSIS	11
SHIGO TOXIN-PRODUCING ESCHERICHIA COLI	<5
SHIGELLOSIS	<5
STREP THROAT	84
STREPTOCOCCUS PNEUMONIAE, INVASIVE	1
SYPHILIS	1

**COMMUNICABLE DISEASE YTD  
REPORTED FOR SAGINAW COUNTY  
1/1/2011– 09/30/11**

Disease	No. Reported
ANIMAL BITE	57
CAMPYLOBACTER	<5
CHICKENPOX (Varicella)	11
CHLAMYDIA (Genital)	1121
COCCIDIOIDOMYCOSIS	<5
CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS	<5
FLU LIKE DISEASE	8168
GASTROINTESTINAL ILLNESS	3986
GIARDIASIS	<5
GONORRHEA	137
GUILLAIN-BARRE SYNDROME	<5
HEAD LICE	299
HEPATITIS A	<5
HEPATITIS B CHRONIC	7
HEPATITIS C ACUTE	<5
HEPATITIS C CHRONIC	88
HEPATITIS E	<5
HIV	<5
<b>INFLUENZA</b>	<b>20</b>
LEGIONELLOSIS	<5
MENINGITIS-ASEPTIC	19
MENINGITIS-BACTERIAL	<5
NOROVIRUS	<5
<b>RABIES</b>	<b>0</b>
SALMONELLOSIS	20
SHIGA TOXIN-PRODUCING ESCHERICHIA COLI	<5
SHIGELLOSIS	10
STREP THROAT	1833
STREPTOCOCCUS PNEUMONIAE, INVASIVE	<5
SYPHILIS	5
TUBERCULOSIS	1



Saginaw County Department of Public  
Health

1600 N. Michigan Avenue

Saginaw, MI 48602

Please visit our website at [www.saginawpublichealth.org](http://www.saginawpublichealth.org)  
where our communicable disease pamphlets are available.

Articles for this newsletter are written and researched by the following members of the Personal and Preventive Health Services Division: Mary Mikulich, R.N., B.S.N., Tawnya Simon, R.N., B.S.N., M.S.A., Susan Gottlieb, R.N., and Kemberly Parham, R.N., B.S.N.

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your e-mail address to: [kburlingame@saginawcounty.com](mailto:kburlingame@saginawcounty.com)**

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