

Rabies in St. Mary's County

Fact Sheet

What is rabies?

Rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The virus infects the central nervous system, causing encephalopathy and, ultimately, death.

Are we at risk?

We have seen an increase nationwide in the number of individuals bitten by domestic animals (cats and dogs) as well as wild animals. Animal bites alone account for well over 500,000 incidents each year. Countless more bites are not reported to authorities and go untreated. On average, about a dozen people die each year from dog bites. This should not happen! Bite and Non-Bite (Scratch) Exposures need to be assessed to determine whether you or your loved ones have been placed at risk for Rabies Exposure.

A Bite or Non-Bite (Scratch) incident in which the skin has been broken is potentially at risk for rabies exposure. The risk of exposure is higher if the site of injury comes in contact with the blood and/or saliva of an animal that may have potentially exposed itself through contact with another suspected at-risk animal.

Bite and Non-Bite Exposures to potentially rabid animals involving humans and animals need to be reported immediately to the appropriate local agency. Per Maryland State Law [Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 10.06.02.04], an "individual who knows of an animal that has rabies or is suspected of having rabies or of an animal that has had a bite from or non-bite contact with an animal known to have or suspected of having rabies shall report the facts immediately..." to the local animal control authority for a proper risk assessment.



What can be done to prevent rabies?

Vaccinate animals

After the initial vaccination, a regular booster shot schedule should be determined by a veterinarian. Vaccines are available at your veterinarian's office or at the clinics hosted by the St. Mary's Animal Welfare League (SMAWL) in partnership with the St. Mary's County Health Department. These clinics are typically held at the St Mary's County Fairgrounds, and a small fee is required per dose. Information for upcoming clinics can be found at smawl.org or by calling 301-475-8018.

Report incidents!

If you see an animal exhibiting any symptoms of rabies, please report the sighting to **Animal Control at 301-475-8018**. If you are bitten or scratched by any animal, report the incident to the **St. Mary's County Sheriff's Department at 301-475-8008**.

Pets are our first line of protection against rabies. Protecting them protects us!

For more information:

St. Mary's County Health Department
Environmental Health Division
301-475-4321 | smchd.env@maryland.gov



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HEALTH DEPARTMENT**
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