



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Managing Rabies

After an encounter with an animal suspected or confirmed of having rabies, treatment is promptly needed in order to prevent the disease. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate the condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

## Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

<b>Rabies Virus</b>	The rabies virus can infect any mammal and cause disease, however, the virus is spread among certain animals more commonly than others. The virus causes disease that affects the central nervous system and is almost always fatal.
<b>Rabies Vaccine</b>	When it is suspected that an animal encounter could have resulted in the transmission of rabies, four doses of rabies vaccine are given on days 0, 3, 7, and 14. These are given by injection in the shoulder (deltoid) or in the case of children, in the front (anterolateral) of the thigh.
<b>Central Nervous System</b>	The system that includes the brain, spinal cord, and nerves, and passes messages back and forth between the body and the brain. Rabies affects the central nervous system and is almost always fatal if not treated.
<b>Zoonotic Disease</b>	Rabies is a zoonotic disease, which means that it can be transmitted from animals to humans.
<b>Reservoir Animal</b>	Certain animals are more commonly associated with transmitting the rabies virus, and in the United States this includes wild animals such as raccoons, skunks, bats, foxes, and coyotes, as well as domesticated animals such as cats, dogs, and cattle. In most cases human infections occur from pet dogs.
<b>Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG)</b>	A biologic drug that is infiltrated around and into any bites or scratches that activates an immediate immune response to the rabies virus. It is normally given as soon as possible after the animal encounter, but can be given up to seven days later.
<b>Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)</b>	A three-step process that reduces the risk of developing rabies after a bite or a scratch from an infected animal. The first step is to wash the area for 15 minutes with soap and water or water alone. The second step is to administer HRIG (human rabies immune globulin) and the third is to give the rabies vaccine.
<b>Wound Washing</b>	Thoroughly cleaning a wound from an animal encounter lowers the risk of transmitting the rabies virus significantly. Wounds should be carefully washed with soap and flushed with water for at least 15 minutes, as recommended by the World Health Organization. Wounds may also be cleaned with detergent or a povidone-iodine solution, if available.

