Rabies (Hydrophobia)

You may have been exposed to rabies. It can be carried by skunks, bats, woodchucks, raccoons and foxes. It is less common in dogs. However, dog bits are one of the most common bites for which the rabies vaccine is given. A person gets rabies from the infected *saliva* (spit) of the animal. Most people get sick twenty to ninety days after being bitten. This varies based on the location of the bite. The rabies virus affects the brain. The closer to the head the bite occurs, the less time it will take the illness to develop. Once rabies develops it almost always causes death. It is often necessary to start treatment whether it is known if the animal is healthy or not. Your caregiver will determine this by using guidelines of the CDC (Communicable Disease Center).

If bitten by an animal and the animal can be observed to see if it remains healthy, often no further treatment is necessary other than care of the wounds caused by the animal. If the animal has been killed it can be sent into a state laboratory. The brain can be examined to see if the animal had rabies.

TREATMENT

There is no known treatment for rabies once the disease starts. This is a viral illness. Antibiotics do not help. This is why caregivers use extra caution and treat questionable bites with rabies vaccine to prevent the disease.

RABIES IMMUNIZATION SCHEDULE - POST-EXPOSURE

Be sure to record the dates of your injections for your records.
1st Injection Date
Day 3
Day 7
Day 14

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

If you have received a bite from an unknown animal, make sure you know the instructions for follow up. If the animal was sent to a laboratory for examination, make sure you know how you are to obtain your results.

- Keep wound clean, dry, and dressed as suggested by your caregiver.
- Take antibiotics as directed. Finish the prescription even if the wound appears OK.
- Keep injured part elevated as much as possible.
- Do not resume use of the affected area until directed.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- An oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests, which is not controlled with medications.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is *nausea* (feeling sick to your stomach), vomiting, chills or a high temperature.
- There is unusual behavior including hyperactivity, fear of water (*hydrophobia*), or fear of air (*aerophobia*)
- If pain prevents movement of any joint.
- If you are unable to move a finger or toe.
- The wound becomes more inflamed and swollen, or has a *purulent* (pus-like) discharge.
- You notice that there is a foreign substance, such as cloth or a tooth, in the wound.
- If a red line develops at the site of the wound and begins to move up the arm or leg.

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