



Guide for Residents

WHAT TO DO WHEN A BAT IS INSIDE

Rabies is a **rare but serious viral disease** that affects the nervous system of mammals, including humans. In Ohio, bats are a primary wildlife reservoir for rabies. While most bats do not carry rabies, **any direct contact with a bat should be taken seriously.**

IF YOU FIND A BAT IN YOUR HOME

- **Do NOT touch** the bat with bare hands.
- Keep people and pets away from the bat.
- Close interior doors to confine it to one room.
- Turn off lights if possible and wait for assistance.
- It is recommended you contact a wildlife removal company trained to handle bats. If safe to do so, place a container (box, coffee can, bucket) over the bat and slide cardboard underneath to contain it.
- If submission is necessary for rabies testing and the bat is still alive, the bat must be in 11" X 11" X 23" inch container or smaller. A cardboard box is the most preferred container. This can be submitted to the **Licking County Health Department's Environmental Health Division.**



WHAT COUNTS AS RABIES EXPOSURE?

Rabies spreads through saliva or neural tissue, typically via a bite. However, bat bites can be small and go unnoticed.

You may have been exposed if:

- You were **bitten or scratched** by a bat.
- A bat's saliva contacted **broken skin, eyes, nose, or mouth.**
- You had **direct bare-skin contact** with a bat and cannot rule out a bite.
- A bat was found in a room with:
 - A **sleeping person**
 - An **unattended child**
 - A **person who is mentally impaired, intoxicated, or unable to communicate**

Being in the same house as a bat is **not automatically an exposure.** The concern is **direct contact or inability to rule out contact.**

WHAT TO DO IF EXPOSURE IS POSSIBLE

If you believe someone may have been exposed:



STEP 1: Wash Immediately

Wound washing significantly reduces rabies risk.

- Wash the area thoroughly with **soap and water for at least 15 minutes.**
- Apply an iodine or alcohol-based disinfectant if available.



STEP 2: Contact Your Local Health Department

Report the incident as soon as possible. In Ohio, animal bites and suspected rabies exposures must be reported within 24 hours.

Your health department will:

- Conduct a rabies risk assessment.
- Determine whether the bat should be tested.
- Decide whether **Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)** is recommended.



STEP 3: Seek Medical Care

If advised, a healthcare provider will begin rabies PEP. Rabies PEP is highly effective at preventing disease if given before symptoms start.

Rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear — **do not delay reporting or seeking medical evaluation.**



SHOULD THE BAT BE TESTED?

- If there is a **credible exposure**, and the bat is still alive, the bat must be in 11" X 11"X 23" inch container or smaller. A cardboard box is the most preferred container. This can be submitted to the **Licking County Health Department's Environmental Health Division**. A \$60 fee applies for any submission of bats that are still alive.
- The bat would be humanely euthanized and submitted for testing which is performed at the state public health laboratory. (There is no live animal rabies test).
- If the bat tests negative, rabies treatment is not needed.
- If the bat is released or unavailable for testing and exposure cannot be ruled out, PEP may be recommended.

WHAT DOES NOT COUNT AS AN EXPOSURE?

- Seeing a bat flying overhead outdoors.
- Finding bat droppings (guano).
- Touching surfaces a bat contacted.
- Contact with bat urine or feces.
- Being in another room of the house.

Rabies virus does **not** survive well in the environment and is inactivated by drying, heat, and sunlight.

WHAT ABOUT MY PETS?

If your dog or cat had contact with a bat:

- Contact your veterinarian and local health department immediately.
- Vaccinated pets may require a booster and observation period.
- Unvaccinated pets may face strict quarantine requirements.

Keeping pets up-to-date on rabies vaccination helps protect both animals and people.

PREVENTING BATS IN THE HOME

- Seal gaps larger than ¼ inch around roofs, siding, chimneys, and vents.
- Install window screens and chimney caps.
- Use professional wildlife exclusion services if needed.
- Never handle bats yourself.

Bats are beneficial wildlife and protected in many circumstances. **Exclusion** (preventing entry), **not extermination**, is the appropriate control method.



If you need assistance, contact the Environmental Health Division at 740-349-6475 or the Ohio Department of Health Zoonotic Disease Program at 614-752-1029

