



Reprinted from <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/>

## Rabies ALERT

Veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) who were bitten or exposed in some other way to the saliva of a warm-blooded animal while deployed, should be evaluated for the risk of rabies exposure by a health care professional.

Your risk of being exposed to rabies is much higher if you served in parts of the world including Iraq and Afghanistan, where domestic animals are not vaccinated against rabies. Recently a U.S. soldier who had served in Afghanistan died of rabies. Contact your [nearest VA health care facility](#) or your health care provider if you think you may be at risk.

### OEF/OIF/OND Veterans may have been exposed to rabies



OEF/OIF/OND Veterans who were bitten or had contact with the saliva from a warm-blooded animal such as a dog, cat, bat, fox, skunk, raccoon, mongoose or jackal while deployed in the **previous 18 months** are advised to seek medical care. This includes those Veterans who did not have a complete medical evaluation or post-exposure prophylaxis (rabies vaccine and immunoglobulin) following an exposure incident. Rabies prophylaxis is treatment given after exposure to prevent rabies.

**If you are unsure** whether you received appropriate care, you must be evaluated. If you were exposed more than 18 months ago, you are at lower risk but still can be evaluated by VA if you are enrolled. Veterans not enrolled in the VA health care system, [find out if you qualify for VA health care](#).

### Rabies symptoms

If you were exposed to rabies, you may not have any symptoms. By the time any symptoms appear, rabies often cannot be successfully treated.

As the disease progresses, the person may experience delirium, hallucinations, slight or partial paralysis, anxiety, confusion, increase in saliva, difficulty swallowing, fear of water, and insomnia. Death usually occurs within days of the onset of these symptoms.

## **What should I do if I was bitten or exposed while deployed?**

Get evaluated today. Discuss what happened and what, if any, treatment you received with your health care provider. It is often impossible to know if the animal you had contact with had rabies. Rabies is a very serious disease. VA wants to understand your specific case and discuss treatment options with you. Your health care provider will help you do this.

If you are concerned about your risk for rabies, talk to your health care provider or contact your [nearest VA health care facility](#).