



Rabies Vaccine: Postexposure

A series of vaccines is necessary following an exposure to rabies...

Rabies is a serious, yet preventable viral disease of mammals, most often transmitted through the bite of a “rabid” animal (e.g. raccoons, skunks, bats). In the event of a known or possible exposure to rabies, it is necessary to receive a series of rabies vaccinations over the course of two weeks. In order to protect yourself from developing rabies, and reduce risk to others, it is imperative you complete this series as outlined below.

What does the series involve?

Rabies postexposure vaccination includes getting multiple doses of vaccine—rabies vaccine and/or a passive antibody called HRIG (Human Rabies Immune Globulin)—as soon as possible after exposure.

- **For people who have NEVER been vaccinated against rabies:** postexposure anti-rabies vaccination should include administration of both passive antibody and vaccine. This combination of vaccines is recommended for both bite and nonbite exposures, regardless of the interval between exposure and the initiation of treatment.
- **For people who HAVE been previously vaccinated** or who are receiving “preexposure vaccination” for rabies (e.g. Vet students): vaccination should include only the regular rabies vaccine (not HRIG).

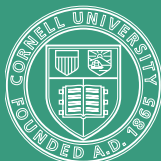
Vaccine timing: Day 0, 3, 7, 14 (& sometimes 28)

Rabies prevention is a serious matter and it is very important that vaccines be given on schedule. The first dose of vaccine administered is considered your

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“Day 0” dose. You will need to receive additional vaccinations on **Day 3, 7, and 14**. Individuals with compromised immunity may need to get a fifth dose of vaccine on **Day 28**.

Administrative support staff at Cornell Health or at other health care facilities can help arrange all appointments for your vaccinations.

Note: If a scheduled dose falls on a day Cornell Health is not open, you can receive the dose at another location (e.g., Cayuga Medical Center’s Convenient Care Center or Emergency Department).

Please consult with your health care provider or your state/local public health officials if you are not able to have a shot at the recommended interval.

Are there side effects?

It is common to experience mild local reactions at the vaccine site (soreness, redness, swelling or itching). Some people also experience headache, nausea, abdominal pain, muscle aches or dizziness. Serious side effects are very rare. You can call Cornell Health any time to discuss any concerns you have about a reaction: 607-255-5155.

Coverage for rabies vaccines

If you are covered by a Cornell Student Health Plan (SHP or SHP-M), you can receive rabies vaccinations at Cornell Health at no cost.

The Student Health Fee *does not* cover these vaccines. **If you have private insurance,** contact your health insurance carrier to determine your coverage.

- **If covered,** you can submit expenses to your plan for reimbursement. (Note: if Cornell Health provides the vaccine, charges will go on your Bursar bill unless otherwise requested.)
- **If not covered,** the local health department (TCHD) can help defray costs. Call TCHD at 607-274-6600. Alert them to your exposure and ask for assistance with the postexposure vaccines.

For more information

[cdc.gov/rabies](https://www.cdc.gov/rabies)

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