

The Central Massachusetts Disaster Animal Response Team, Inc.
RABIES VACCINATION WAIVER

To vaccinate or not to vaccinate, that is the question !!!

Questions about rabies:

1. *As a disaster animal responder, should I be vaccinated for rabies?*

Answer: It is highly recommended that all disaster responders be vaccinated for rabies. Since 1992, the raccoon strain of rabies has become endemic in Massachusetts. All dogs and cats in Massachusetts are required by law to be vaccinated for rabies but in reality this does not occur. We can never be absolutely assured that any vaccinated or unvaccinated dog or cat is not carrying rabies. The Center for Disease Control considers individuals that work with animals from a rabies endemic region in the "frequent" exposure risk category. The CDC recommends these individuals obtain the primary course of rabies vaccination with serologic monitoring and /or booster vaccination every two years.

2. *If I am exposed to rabies, what is the treatment?*

Answer: For **vaccinated individuals**, the wound is immediately and thoroughly cleansed with soap and water. Then 2 doses of rabies vaccine are given, one is given immediately, the other is given three days later.

For **non-vaccinated individuals**, the wound is immediately and thoroughly cleaned with soap and water. The area around the wound is injected with Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG), then 5 doses of rabies vaccine are given after the exposure on days 0, 3, 7, 14, and 28.

As one can see, pre-exposure vaccination reduces the number of injections the patient would receive and does help to protect against possible unknown exposure to the rabies virus. The injection of HRIG around the bite wound is painful and could be avoided by having pre-exposure vaccination prophylaxis.

3. *Which regimen is more effective in preventing rabies, pre-exposure vaccination or the full series of post-exposure injections?*

Answer: Both approaches are effective in preventing rabies infection. Both require injections after exposure. The main benefit of pre-exposure vaccination is that some immunity has been already mounted if you are unknowingly exposed to a rabid animal.

The following information on the reverse side of this page is taken from the Rabies Prevention – United States, 1991 published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Center for Disease Control. This article further explains the risks and benefits of rabies vaccination prophylaxis.

I have read the material provided and understand that due to my voluntary decision to be assist animals during a disaster or emergency, I may be at risk of exposure to rabies infection. After reading this material and in consultation with my physician, I decline to under go pre-exposure rabies prophylactic vaccination.

Signature

Date

Parent or Guardian Signature (if student is under 18 years of age)

I have chosen to have pre-exposure rabies vaccination. The dates the vaccinations were administered were

_____, _____, and _____.

Signature

