

## Bats and Rabies

Bats play key roles in our ecosystem by eating insects, pollinating plants and scattering seeds. However, some can also carry diseases that are dangerous for humans, like rabies, a fatal virus spread from mammals to humans. Over the past few years, most human cases of rabies in the United States have been caused by bat bites. Any bat can carry the virus, and it's impossible to tell if a bat has rabies by looking at it. This is why you should **never** touch a bat, and immediately see a doctor if you think you may have been bitten or scratched by a bat. Rabies is fatal and has no cure, but you can prevent yourself from getting infected if you get treatment before symptoms begin.

Abnormal behaviors for bats includes being:

- active during the day
- unable to fly
- easily approachable
- found in a place where they are not usually seen (like in your home or on your lawn)



### What if you find a bat outside?

Bats are wild animals, surviving best when outside in their natural environment. If you see a bat outside you can look, but don't touch. If you find a bat on the ground and it appears sick or injured, **never** touch it. Wild animals are not used to being touched by people and touching them may cause further injury or stress and even pose as a health risk to you. Instead call DC Animal Control at **(202) 576-6664**.

### What if you're bitten or scratched by a bat?

If you, a member of your family, or one of your pets is bitten or scratched by a bat immediately wash the wound with warm soap and water, seek medical care, and contact DC Animal Control at **(202) 576-6664**. Anyone bitten by the bat must undergo rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), a series of multiple vaccines, as soon as possible to prevent becoming ill. Rabies is fatal if someone is infected, but people who have been exposed can prevent illness and death if they seek care before symptoms start. If the bat can be captured it will be tested for rabies. If it tests negative, PEP is not necessary.



### What if you find a bat in your home?

If there is any chance that a person or pet had contact with the bat, the bat should be safely captured, **WITHOUT TOUCHING IT**, and tested for rabies.

To safely capture a bat:

1. Close all doors and windows.
2. Find a small container and a piece of cardboard large enough to cover the opening of the container. Punch small air holes in the cardboard.
3. Put on leather work gloves.
4. When the bat lands, approach it slowly and **without touching it**, place the container over it then slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Tape the cardboard to the container, securing the bat inside.
5. If you, a member of your family, or a pet had skin-to-skin contact with bat call DC Animal Control at (202) 576-6664 to have the bat tested for rabies.
6. If you are certain there was no contact between the bat and any people or pets in your home, carefully hold the cardboard over the container and take the bat outdoors and release it away from people and pets.

If you cannot safely contain a bat call DC Animal Control at (202) 576-6664 and they will remove the bat for you.



**WARNING:** If you think a bat was in a room with a person that cannot state: *"I did not touch the bat and know I was not bitten,"* the bat needs to be submitted to DC Animal Control for rabies testing. This includes finding a bat in the room of a **young child, toddler, or baby**, with a **person with a learning disability**, a **sleeping person**, or with an **inebriated person**. If the bat cannot be found and submitted for rabies testing, **the person needs to be seen by a physician immediately** to receive rabies vaccines. This will help prevent them from becoming sick with rabies.