



Warmer Weather Brings Increase in Bats Found Indoors

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Bats found in the home need to be handled with care

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 21, 2018

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Bats found in the home need to be handled with care

SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash. — Most bats are harmless, but a few carry rabies, a deadly disease that bats can pass on to humans through small bites and scratches. With the higher temps and windows being left open, some residents are waking up to find uninvited house guests. Just this week, eight individuals in Snohomish County were recommended to begin preventative treatments because of potential exposure to bats that tested positive for rabies.

While these bats were found in Arlington, Edmonds, Monroe, and Snohomish, bats can be found throughout the area. Bats like to “hang out” in vacation cabins, attics, barns and outbuildings, and wherever there are plenty of insects they can eat.

Bats have very small teeth, and because a bite or scratch may not leave a clear mark, it’s possible to be bitten and not know it. If you or a family member wake up in a room and see a bat, it is best to assume there was contact with the bat. [Safely capture the bat](#) and contact the Snohomish Health District’s Communicable Disease team at 425.339.5278 for further guidance.

RESOURCES: [Rabies and Bats](#) (courtesy of Public Health – Seattle & King County)

Rabies is a severe viral disease that affects the central nervous system. It is almost always deadly once the virus attacks your body, but you can receive preventive treatment if you’ve been bitten or scratched by a bat or other potentially rabid animal. Symptoms normally occur two to eight weeks after exposure, but the incubation period may vary.

What are the symptoms?

While early symptoms include headache, fever, and sometimes pain at the site of the exposure (bite), the disease rapidly progresses into a severe nervous system (neurologic) illness.

Symptoms may include agitation, confusion, paralysis, and difficulty swallowing. Most patients die within a few days or weeks of onset.

What should I do if I find a bat in my living space?

- Never handle a bat with bare hands.
- Only capture bats that have had direct contact with a person or pet, or if the bat was found in the room of someone who may have had contact with the bat (i.e., someone was sleeping in the room or building where the bat was seen).
- Do not release the live bat or throw out a dead bat, unless your local public health has told you that it will not be necessary to test the bat.

What should I do if an animal bites me?

- Clean the site of any animal bite with soap and water.
- Contact your health care provider and the Snohomish Health District to determine the potential for rabies exposure, need for treatment, and to decide whether or not to test the animal for rabies.
- If you believe your pet has been exposed, please contact your veterinarian for further assessment.

What can I do reduce the risk of rabies exposure for my family and me?

- Do not handle wild animals, especially bats.
- Teach your children never to touch or handle bats, even dead ones. Have your children tell an adult if they find a bat at home, at school, or with a pet.
- Keep bats out of your living space by bat-proofing your home.
- Pets can get rabies if bitten by a rabid animal. Protect them and yourself by getting them vaccinated routinely. Dogs, cats, and ferrets are now required to be vaccinated in Washington. Consult your veterinarian for vaccine recommendations.
- People often call a pest control company to get rid of bats in or near their home. Those companies should also refer people to the Health District to make sure the client was not exposed to rabies.

The Snohomish Health District works for a safer and healthier community through disease prevention, health promotion, and protection from environmental threats. To read more about the District and for important health information, visit www.snohd.org.

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