

# Rabies Protocol



## Rabies Vaccination and Post Exposure Protocol

### Availability of Rabies vaccine PEP through the PHU for GP Practices

Rabies virus and Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV) belong to a group of viruses called lyssaviruses. These viruses are usually transmitted via a bite from an infected (“rabid”) animal. Rabies is carried by mammals in many overseas countries. Both are spread by bites and scratches. These diseases can be prevented by rapid and thorough cleaning of the wound with soap and water for at least five minutes and apply an antiseptic to the wound as well as urgent post exposure assessment by GP for possible vaccination and maybe a dose of immunoglobulin. **There is no cure once a person develops Rabies.**

The best protection against being exposed to rabies or other lyssaviruses (including ABLV) is to avoid handling any bat in Australia or overseas, or any wild or domestic land-dwelling mammal in a country where there is a rabies virus risk. A good UK Government website listing rabies endemic countries can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rabies-risks-by-country/rabies-risks-in-terrestrial-animals-by-country>

Rabies vaccine is used to protect against rabies and ABLV infection before a potential exposure. A course of three injections, given over one month, is recommended for people whose job or other activities place them at increased risk of being bitten or scratched by bats in Australia or mammals in rabies endemic countries. Please see the new digital Australian Immunisation Handbook for further recommendations @ <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/vaccine-preventable-diseases/rabies-and-other-lyssaviruses>

We encourage all GPs to contact their local **Public Health Unit** for advice for ALL patient bitten or scratched by animals or bats that could transmit rabies. Public Health Unit staff will work with doctors to assess the risk and where indicated, will arrange for rabies vaccines and immunoglobulin (RIG) to be delivered to GP or hospital. The vaccines and RIG can be ordered by Public Health Unit staff to the NSW Vaccine Centre, therefore patient can have the post exposure treatment prophylaxis for FREE. This protocol also ensures accurate assessment of injury based on the NSW Health control guidelines for rabies, timely and continuity of post exposure treatment to patients. In addition to that, PHU staff can also advise GP to send their patients to nearest hospital or medical practice that may have available stocks of vaccines and RIG for public use.

**For further information please call your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 or visit the NSW Health website.**