

BATS AND RABIES



This information is intended to help you reduce your risk of exposure to rabies at the University of Washington.

WHAT IS RABIES?

Rabies is a life-threatening virus that exists in the saliva of an infected animal and can be transmitted through a bite or scratch.

Bats are the only known carriers of rabies in Washington state.

Although most bats do not carry rabies, rabid bats have been found in almost every county in Washington state. The number of bats that tested positive for rabies in 2018 was higher than previous years.

RABIES IS FATAL: NEVER TOUCH A BAT

Anyone who touches a bat with bare skin (or finds a bat in their home) should be evaluated by a doctor as soon as possible after the encounter.

Death from rabies can be prevented if treatment begins before symptoms appear. Once symptoms of rabies appear, the disease is almost always fatal.



IF YOU HAVE CONTACT WITH A BAT ...

If you suspect a bat has bitten, scratched or come into direct contact with you or another person, get medical attention immediately.

If you can safely capture the bat, take it with you so it can be tested for rabies. Testing can confirm what follow-up medical care is needed (if any).

Use thick gloves if you must capture a live bat or handle a dead bat. For information on how to safely capture a bat, please visit kingcounty.gov/bats.

IF YOU CAPTURE A BAT:

DO NOT release a live bat or dispose of a dead bat that has bitten, scratched, or had direct contact with a person or pet until Public Health — Seattle & King County has notified you to do so.

WHAT IF I FIND A BAT AT THE UW?

If a bat is found indoors at the University, please call EH&S at 206.543.7262 or phdept@uw.edu, or contact Public Health — Seattle & King County at 206.296.4774.

Notify EH&S if the bat has had direct contact with a person. It will be captured by a professional wildlife biologist and brought to the public health department for testing.

If a bat is found outdoors, and it has had no contact with any person, no action is needed.