



RABIES VACCINE

What is the rabies vaccine?

The rabies vaccine protects against rabies. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada. It is provided as part of the New Brunswick Publicly Funded Immunization Program.

What are the benefits of the vaccine?

The rabies vaccine is the best way to prevent rabies disease. The rabies vaccine is given to persons who may have been exposed to the virus from contact with a potentially rabid animal. It can also be given to individuals at risk of exposure in their work.

How is the rabies vaccine given?

Rabies vaccine is given as a series of injections into the upper arm in older children and adults; and into the thigh in infants.

Who should receive the vaccine?

- People who work in close contact with rabid animals or the rabies virus. This includes laboratory workers who handle the rabies virus; veterinarians and veterinary staff; animal control and wildlife workers; hunter and trappers in areas with confirmed rabies; those working or exploring caves; and some travelers to rabies endemic areas.
- Persons who come in contact with the rabies virus or an animal that is suspected to have rabies should be assessed by a healthcare provider to determine if treatment is necessary. Treatment and the rabies vaccine are highly effective in preventing rabies.
- If you have been immunized against rabies and then exposed to rabies, you should seek medical attention.

Who should not receive rabies vaccine?

The vaccine pre-exposure should not be given if you:

- had a severe allergic reaction to the vaccine in the past; or
- are allergic to any of the ingredients of the vaccine or its container.

Because rabies is nearly always fatal when not treated, the rabies vaccine should always be given to people who have had a significant exposure to the virus, such as through contact (e.g. bite, scratch, saliva etc.) with an animal proven to be infected by rabies. Experts should be consulted in managing the treatment of these patients.

What are the possible reactions after receiving the vaccine?

The most common reactions include injection site reactions of soreness, redness, itchiness, and/or swelling where the vaccine was given.

With any vaccine, there is an extremely rare possibility (less than one in a million people) of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. For this reason, it is important to remain in the clinic for 15 minutes after receiving the rabies vaccine. Signs of this reaction may include rash, difficulty breathing or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. This reaction can be treated.

What can be done for reactions to the vaccine?

- A cold compress at the injection site may reduce discomfort.
- For discomfort and fever, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or Ibuprofen (Advil®) according to the manufacturer's directions.
- Aspirin (ASA) should **NOT** be given to children younger than 18 years due to its link to Reye's syndrome.

Any unexpected or serious reaction to a vaccine should be reported to your health-care provider.

What else you need to know.

- If you think you have been exposed to rabies virus, contact a healthcare provider immediately.
- Inform your immunization provider if you have any health problems or allergies.
- Your immunization provider will give you a record of immunization. Keep this record in a safe place and bring it with you when you are next due for immunization.
- Individuals 16 years and older can give their own consent. Children younger than 16 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.
- If you have any unusual reactions to the vaccine, or you have any questions or concerns, please contact your health-care provider.

Further Information

For additional information, contact your health-care provider, [local Public Health office](#) or Tele-Care 811.

Useful websites:

- Government of New-Brunswick <http://www.gnb.ca/health>
- Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness and Promotion <http://www.immunize.cpha.ca>
- Public Health Agency of Canada <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca>