

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Rabies is a deadly disease that kills both animals and humans. When untreated, the rabies virus is almost always fatal. Fortunately, rabies is also almost 100 percent preventable. The Oneida County Health Department (OCHD) would like to help members of the public take the necessary steps to stay clear of exposure to rabies.

Rabies transmission can occur from a bat bite or if a bat's saliva comes in contact with a cut or abrasion, or with mucous membranes, such as the eyes, nose or mouth.

"People should always stay away from bats and other wild animals to prevent possible exposure to rabies," said Phyllis D. Ellis, Director of Public Health. "If you see a bat, dead or alive, don't touch it."

Rabies in humans can be prevented by avoiding contact with wild, stray, and unknown domestic animals, ensuring pets are up-to-date on rabies vaccinations, and receiving prompt medical advice following animal bites and other significant exposures to potentially rabid animals.

"It's important to remember that having unvaccinated pets or spending time outdoors can put you within reach of a rabid animal," said Ellis. "OCHD urges people not to approach or feed wild animals and strays. Protect yourself, your pet and the community by getting your animals vaccinated."

To avoid exposure to rabies:

- Never touch a wild bat or any other wild animal. If you can touch the animal, chances are it is sick.
- Teach children who find a bat to leave it alone and tell an adult.
- Do not pick up a bat with your hands, even if you're wearing gloves. Use a shovel.
- If you are bitten by a bat, suspect you've been exposed to bat saliva, or awake to find a bat in the room where you are sleeping, contact Oneida County Health Department.
- Keep your doors and windows covered with intact screens. Do not leave screenless doors or windows open in the evening.
- If you have bats in your house, call a professional trapper who has experience eliminating bats from homes.
- Keep your pets up to date on rabies vaccines. If you are unsure your pets are up to date, call your veterinarian.

For additional information: www.ocgov.net
<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html>