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Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis

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Reduced (4-Dose) Vaccine Schedule for Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is recommending that a reduced (4-dose) rabies vaccine schedule be used for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) in previously unvaccinated persons. Human and animal studies indicate that a 4-dose vaccine schedule, in combination with prompt wound care and administration of rabies immune globulin (RIG), is highly effective in preventing human rabies among previously unvaccinated, immunocompetent persons. Persons with altered immunocompetence should continue to receive the 5-dose vaccination series.

The first dose of the 4-dose rabies vaccine regimen should be administered as soon as possible (day 0) after exposure. Remaining doses are administered on days 3, 7, and 14. Recommendations regarding RIG remain unchanged. For the complete ACIP recommendations please go to http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/resources/acip_recommendations.html.

Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) in Riverside County

The decision to administer rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) following an animal bite is ultimately that of the victim and his or her health care provider. An individual assessment should be made for each biting incident. Animal bites should be reported to the local animal control agency where the bite occurred.

While all mammals are susceptible to rabies, bat bites are of highest concern for rabies exposure in Riverside County, followed by bites from wild carnivores such as skunks, raccoons, and coyotes. Rabies PEP is typically warranted in these circumstances unless the animal can be safely captured, euthanized and tested for rabies by the Riverside County Public Health Laboratory.

Bites from gnawing mammals such as hares, and small rodents such as squirrels, chipmunks, hamsters, guinea pigs, rats, and mice are of lowest concern for rabies exposure in Riverside County and typically do not warrant rabies PEP.

Bites from domestic dogs, cats, or ferrets should prompt 10 day confinement and observation of the biting animal under the direction of the local animal control agency. If the animal develops symptoms of rabies during the 10 day period, the animal should be immediately euthanized and tested for rabies by the Riverside County Public Health Laboratory. If the animal is healthy at the end of the 10 day period, rabies PEP of the bite victim is not warranted. Each situation must be evaluated if the animal cannot be located for observation.

For questions regarding rabies post-exposure prophylaxis, and disease reporting requirements please contact Disease Control Branch at (951) 358-5107.