

Washburn County
Health and Human Services Department

Jim LeDuc, Director

Health Department

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Child Support Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bats are active this time of year, and while bats do a lot of good chowing down on the insect population, bats are not good house-mates.

Unlike other potential rabies exposures from an animal, a bat bite or scratch may be small enough to go un-noticed. If a bat is found in a room where a small child or incapacitated adult has been sleeping, the person should see their medical provider to discuss starting the rabies vaccine series. Most of the rabies deaths in the United States are from a bat strain of rabies, and frequently the person either did not recall getting bit, or failed to seek medical care.

If a bat does bite, or is suspected of biting or scratching a person, it may be able to be tested to see if it has rabies. Call the Washburn County Health Department at 715-635-4400 for instruction. If the bat has been killed, refrigerate it, but **do not freeze** it until it can be taken to the Health Dept. for testing. You should always discuss Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (Rabies shots) with your medical provider, as you may need to start the vaccine while waiting for the results. If the bat tests negative, the series can be stopped.

Pets often are found with a partially eaten bat in their mouths. Both dogs and cats have been reported with bat exposure. It's a very good idea to keep your pets current on their rabies vaccine, even if your pet never goes outside. The Health Dept. can also test bats that a pet has been exposed to.

For more information, call the Washburn County Health Dept. at 715-635-4400.