



NEWS

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Montgomery County Health Department Announces Rabies Clinic Dates

Norristown, PA (May 17, 2016) – The Montgomery County Health Department (MCHD) will be conducting its annual low-cost Rabies Immunization Clinics on Saturdays in June for the twenty-fifth consecutive year. As in previous years, these clinics are located throughout the county in order to ensure that resident pet owners have access to this disease prevention service.



RABIES CLINIC LOCATIONS

The 2016 Annual Rabies Clinic locations, dates, and times are:

LOCATION	DATE	TIME
Abington Recycling Center 2201 Florey Lane (off of Easton Road) Abington	June 4	9 AM – 11 AM
Collegeville Community Park 4th and Park Avenue Collegeville	June 11	9 AM – 11 AM
Encore Experiences at Harleysville on Alumni Avenue (off of Main Street) Harleysville	June 18	9 AM – 11 AM
Padden Park (Burnside Oakland Park) Burnside Avenue and Oakland Drive West Norriton	June 25	9 AM – 11 AM

WHEN ARRIVING AT THE CLINIC, PLEASE REMEMBER THAT ALL ANIMALS MUST BE LEASHED OR IN AN APPROVED CARRIER

THE VACCINATION COST IS \$10.00 PER SHOT

In 2015, 575 pets were vaccinated at four Rabies Clinic Sites in Montgomery County:

CLINIC SITE	2015
Abington	251
Collegeville	139
Harleysville	120
West Norriton	65
Total	575

For more information about MCHD's Rabies Control Program, please contact the Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at 610-278-5117.

With the warm weather approaching, more residents will be outside with their pets walking or hiking on trails and in parks. These activities could place county residents and their pets at a higher risk of exposure to wild animals and/or stray domestic animals that may have rabies.

What is rabies?

Rabies is a viral disease that affects the central nervous system. It can affect all mammals, including humans. It is usually transmitted to humans via the saliva of an infected animal. Rabies is a fatal disease once symptoms appear.

How is rabies spread?

Rabies is spread most often through the bite of a rabid animal. It can also be spread through a scratch from a rabid animal that breaks the skin or through exposure of an open wound or mucous membrane (eye, nose, or mouth) to saliva from a rabid animal. In Montgomery County, rabies has been found in raccoons, bats, skunks, foxes, groundhogs, beavers, cattle, cats, and dogs.

Is rabies a problem in Pennsylvania?

Rabies continues to be a significant public health problem in the Commonwealth. In the past 10 years, between 350 and 500 animals are annually confirmed in the laboratory to have rabies. In 2015, 88 percent of the animal rabies cases involved raccoons, followed by bats (12%). In contrast to the situation in animals, human rabies in Pennsylvania is rare. The last diagnosed human case in the Commonwealth was in 1984.

All cats and dogs three months of age and older must be vaccinated against rabies.**Pennsylvania State Law and the Montgomery County Public Health Code require this.**

Vaccinating domestic animals is an important way to prevent rabies transmission from wildlife animal reservoirs to the human population.

Many Montgomery County residents are not vaccinating their cats or dogs.

When reviewing the 1,757 animal bites reported to Montgomery County in 2015, 1,304 were animal-to-human, 192 were animal-to-animal, and an additional 261 were domestic animals with a wound of unknown origin that was presumed to be caused by a suspected rabid animal. Of the domestic animals involved in human biting incidents, 56% of cats and 37% of dogs were either unvaccinated or not up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations.

What should I do if an animal bites me?

The first step in rabies prevention is to immediately wash the wound with plenty of soap and warm water, and then promptly seek medical care. If the circumstances of the exposure warrant, human rabies vaccine may be prescribed. The vaccine is a series of four shots given in the arm (or thigh for small children) on days 0, 3, 7, and 14 after presentation to the health care provider. Rabies immune globulin is also given along with the vaccine on day zero. Rabies vaccine is highly effective in preventing the disease after an exposure, if given before any symptoms develop.

Animal rabies remains a problem. The number of animal rabies cases reported to the Montgomery County Health Department in the last ten years is as follows:

YEAR	ANIMAL RABIES CASES INVOLVING HUMAN OR DOMESTIC ANIMAL
2005	17 (8 raccoons; 5 skunks; 2 bats; 2 cats)
2006	10 (7 raccoons; 2 cats; 1 bat)
2007	11 (4 bats; 3 skunks; 2 raccoons; 1 groundhog; 1 steer)
2008	21 (8 skunks; 6 raccoons; 5 bats; 2 cats)
2009	14 (10 raccoons; 2 skunks; 1 fox; 1 bat)
2010	10 (5 raccoons; 3 skunks; 1 bat; 1 cat)
2011	2 (2 raccoons)
2012	15 (9 bats; 3 raccoons; 2 skunks; 1 cat)
2013	7 (3 raccoons; 1 cat; 2 bats; 1 skunk)
2014	18 (8 raccoons; 4 bats; 3 cats; 2 skunks; 1 fox)
2015	8 (7 raccoons; 1 bat)

So far in 2016, there has been one positive animal rabies case in Montgomery County this year involving a raccoon in Lower Merion Township.

The recommended precautions to prevent animal bites and possible rabies risk are:

- Do not feed, befriend, handle, or try to make pets of wild animals or stray domestic animals. Wild animals should not be handled or kept as pets.
- Vaccinate domestic dogs, cats, ferrets, and selected livestock according to your veterinarian's recommendations.
- Obey animal control ordinances, particularly not allowing domestic animals to run at large. All animals should be restrained and leashed when in public.
- If bitten by a wild or domestic animal, immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention from your doctor or hospital emergency room.
- After receiving appropriate medical care, contact the Montgomery County Health Department at 610-278-5117 so that they can investigate whether post-exposure rabies injections are required and provide the appropriate recommendation to the physician.