

Rabies in Malaysia

Warning - Level 3, Avoid Nonessential Travel

Alert - Level 2, Practice Enhanced Precautions

Watch - Level 1, Practice Usual Precautions

What is the current situation?

The Malaysian state of Sarawak has declared parts of three divisions to be “rabies infectious areas.” Five human rabies cases and almost 800 cases of people being bitten by rabid animals have been reported in Serian, Sri Aman, and Kutching divisions as of July 2017. All five people infected with rabies have died.

Public health officials are responding by treating people bitten by local dogs or cats for rabies exposure and advising the public on how to prevent the spread of the disease.

What is rabies?

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that is spread in the saliva of infected animals. All mammals can get rabies. People usually get rabies from licks, bites, or scratches from infected dogs or other animals such as bats, foxes, raccoons, and mongooses.

Rabies affects the central nervous system, ultimately causing brain disease and death. Once symptoms of rabies appear, the disease is nearly always fatal, so prevention is especially important.

What can travelers do to prevent rabies?

Get a rabies vaccine before travel, if recommended.

- Talk to your doctor about your travel plans. If your activities will bring you into contact with animals such as dogs, cats, bats, or other carnivores, you should consider pre-exposure rabies vaccination, which is a 3-shot series (days 0, 7, and 21 or 28) given *before* travel.
- **Even if you get the pre-exposure rabies vaccine, you should still get immediate medical treatment if you are bitten or scratched by an animal during travel.**
- See [Vaccine Information Statement \(http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/rabies.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/rabies.html) for more information.

Avoid animal bites during travel:

- Avoid touching **all** animals, including wild animals and pets. Pets in other countries, such as Malaysia, may not be vaccinated against rabies.
- Supervise children closely, especially around dogs, cats, and wildlife such as monkeys and bats.
- If you are traveling with your pet, supervise your pet closely, and do not allow it to play with local animals, including local pets, and especially avoid stray animals.
- Avoid bringing animals home to the United States. Dogs and cats may be infected with rabies but not show signs until several days or months later. There are also [rules and regulations \(https://www.cdc.gov/importation/bringing-an-animal-into-the-united-states/index.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/importation/bringing-an-animal-into-the-united-states/index.html) for bringing animals and animal products into the United States.
- For more information, see [Be Safe Around Animals \(https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/be-safe-around-animals\)](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/be-safe-around-animals).

Consider medical evacuation insurance:

- Rabies can be treated with a post-exposure vaccine, but the series of shots must be started as soon as possible after animal exposure. This type of vaccination is **not** available in all parts of the world, so consider buying medical evacuation insurance.
- Medical evacuation insurance may cover the cost to transfer you to the nearest destination where complete care can be obtained. Some policies may cover your eventual return to your home country. For more information, see [Insurance \(https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/insurance\)](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/insurance).

Act quickly if an animal bites or scratches you.

- Wash the wound well with soap and water.
- See a healthcare provider right away, even if you don't feel sick or your wound does not look serious. **To prevent rabies, you may need to start a series of vaccinations immediately.**
 - To get vaccinated, be prepared to travel back to the United States or to another area. This type of vaccination is **not** available in all parts of the world, so consider buying insurance that covers the cost of travel to a country that can give you the care you need.
 - For more information, see [Insurance \(https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/insurance\)](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/insurance).
 - For more information about medical care abroad, see [Getting Health Care Abroad \(https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/getting-health-care-abroad\)](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/getting-health-care-abroad) and a list of [Joint Commission International-accredited facilities. \(http://www.jointcommissioninternational.org/\)](http://www.jointcommissioninternational.org/)
 - After you return home, tell your healthcare provider or state health department that you were bitten or scratched during travel and about any treatment you received overseas.
 - If possible, give a copy of your overseas medical record to your US healthcare provider.

Traveler Information

- [CDC's Rabies homepage \(http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/\)](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/)
- [Be Safe Around Animals \(https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/be-safe-around-animals\)](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/be-safe-around-animals)
- [Rabies Vaccine Information Statements \(VIS\) \(https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/rabies.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/rabies.html)

Clinician Information

- [Rabies \(https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/infectious-diseases-related-to-travel/rabies\)](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/infectious-diseases-related-to-travel/rabies) in *CDC Health Information for International Travel*, the “Yellow Book”
- [CDC's Rabies homepage \(http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/\)](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/)
- [Rabies: Notifiable Disease \(http://cymcdn.com/sites/www.cste.org/resource/resmgr/PDFs/CSTENotifiableConditionListA.pdf\)](http://cymcdn.com/sites/www.cste.org/resource/resmgr/PDFs/CSTENotifiableConditionListA.pdf)
- [Rabies Diagnosis \(http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/diagnosis/index.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/diagnosis/index.html)
- [Animal-Associated Hazards \(https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/the-pre-travel-consultation/animal-associated-hazards\)](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/the-pre-travel-consultation/animal-associated-hazards)
- [Rabies Vaccine Information Statements \(VIS\) \(https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/rabies.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/rabies.html)

File Formats Help:

How do I view different file formats (PDF, DOC, PPT, MPEG) on this site? (<https://www.cdc.gov/Other/plugins/>)

(<https://www.cdc.gov/Other/plugins/#pdf>)

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National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID) (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/index.html>)

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