

Animal Risks During Travel

Rabies

Rabies is almost always fatal if not treated promptly with rabies shots. Appropriate rabies vaccines may be difficult for travelers to obtain abroad.

- Never try to pet, handle, or feed unfamiliar animals, even pets.

If you get bitten or scratched by an animal while travelling abroad:

- Wash wound copiously with soap and water for a minimum of 15 minutes
- Apply betadine to wound or any antiseptic available
- If you are pre-immunized with rabies vaccine, you still need two more doses of vaccine, but not immunoglobulin (HRIG)
- If not pre-immunized, find where HRIG is available
- If HRIG not available locally, travel to nearest place where it is available; begin vaccine series as soon as possible; RIG can be given up to seven days after the start of the rabies vaccine series
- Travel medical insurance and medical evacuation insurance are critical under these conditions; **make sure you are insured BEFORE you travel**
- Contact your medical provider when you return home

Dogs

Dogs are the main host and transmitter of rabies in the world, although any mammal can potentially transmit rabies. Dogs cause estimated 50,000 deaths from rabies in Africa and Asia.

Monkeys

Monkeys can spread rabies, as well as herpes B virus, tuberculosis, Ebola and similar viruses.

- Never try to touch or feed monkeys, which can roam wild in some temples in South and Southeast Asia
- Leave all food in the car or hotel, as monkeys can be aggressive if they smell food in your pockets or bags
- Seek medical care to consider antiviral treatment for herpes B (acyclovir or valacyclovir), in addition to obtaining rabies vaccine, if exposed to a monkey bite.

Bats

Bats often have rabies, and they don't just live in caves—they could find their way into your place of lodging.

- If you find a bat in your room after you wake up, you should seek medical care immediately.
- Stay away from caves or mines where there are lots of bats. Rabies vaccine may be recommended for people who will be exploring caves.
- Casual exposure to cave air is not a concern, but bats and other wildlife should not be handled
- Bats can spread other diseases such as histoplasmosis and Marburg fever.

Rodents

Rodents (such as rats and mice) can spread many diseases through bites and scratches, urine, feces, or fleas. These diseases include plague, leptospirosis, hantavirus disease, and rickettsial disease.

- Avoid places that look like they may be infested with rodents
- Do not touch anything that may be contaminated with rodent urine or feces.

Birds

Bird exposure can be responsible for avian flu, which is a respiratory disease that usually infects birds, not people. People rarely get bird flu, but when they do, it usually happens after contact with infected birds (such as chickens, turkeys, geese, pigeons, and pheasants). While you are traveling, you should avoid contact with poultry and all birds.

- Do not touch birds/animals whether they are alive or dead.
- Avoid live bird or poultry markets.
- Avoid other markets or farms with animals (wet markets).
- Eat meat and poultry that is fully cooked (not pink) and served hot.
- Eat hard-cooked eggs (not runny).
- Don't eat or drink dishes that include blood from any animal.
- Don't eat food from street vendors.

Animals at Farms and Markets

As a general precaution, if you are visiting farms, markets, barns, or other places where animals are present, practice general hygiene measures, including regular hand washing before and after touching animals, and avoid contact with sick animals. Avoid contact with camels and camel products, as they may be involved in the transmission of MERS CO-V.

