

# RABIES PRE-EXPOSURE IMMUNIZATION GUIDELINES

## 2014

New Jersey veterinarians, veterinary technicians, students enrolled in veterinary or veterinary technician school, animal control officers, animal shelter workers, persons who will be preparing rabies specimens, persons working closely with wildlife, and persons handling bats are classified in the frequent-risk category and they are recommended to receive rabies pre-exposure immunization. Certain persons travelling to high risk destination around the world may also be recommended to receive rabies pre-exposure immunization.

Pre-exposure immunization consists of three 1.0 ml doses of human diploid cell vaccine (HDCV) or purified chick embryo cell culture (PCEC) administered intramuscularly on days 0, 7, and 21 or 28.

Persons who have received the complete post-exposure treatment series are considered pre-immunized for any future exposures.

**If exposed to a rabid animal, pre-immunized individuals will need only two booster doses of vaccine (days 0 and 3) and NO rabies immune globulin (RIG), as opposed to four doses of vaccine and RIG required for non-immunized individuals.** Pre-immunized individuals should be sure to keep their proof of vaccination to verify their immunized status in the event they are exposed to a rabid animal.

Although antibody levels do not define a person's immune status, they are a marker of continuing immune response. To ensure the continuity of an immune response, titers should be checked periodically, with booster doses administered as needed. Persons in the frequent-risk category should have a serum sample tested every 2 years to determine if an adequate antibody level persists. If their antibody titer is below the 1:5 serum dilution by rapid fluorescent focus inhibition test (RFFIT), a booster dose of vaccine should be given. **Persons who are pre-immunized or have received the complete post-exposure prophylaxis series are considered previously vaccinated for any future exposures.**

### Manufactures of Human rabies vaccines:

There are two human rabies vaccines licensed in the United States that are available from pharmaceutical suppliers:

- RabAvert (PCEC)  
Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics  
Telephone number (800) 244-7668  
<http://www.novartisvaccines.com/products/travel.shtml>
- IMOVAX Rabies (HDCV)  
Sanofi Pasteur  
Telephone number (800) 822-2463 (800 VACCINE)  
<http://www.imovax.com>

Manufacturers will only ship these vaccines to human medical care providers. Travel medicine clinics stock rabies vaccine and may administer it to persons in need of pre-exposure immunization due to their occupation.

### Rabies RFFIT antibody serology testing is performed at the following laboratories:

- Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory  
Telephone: (785) 532-4483  
<http://www.vet.ksu.edu/depts/dmp/service/rabies/index.htm>
- Atlanta Health Associates, Inc.  
Telephone: (800) 717-5612  
<http://www.atlantahealth.net/>

### Preparing blood specimens for testing:

After centrifugation of blood collected in a red-top tube, transfer two ml of serum to an untreated, plastic, leak-proof container and refrigerate. Send the labeled specimen along with the name and vaccination history for each serum, as well as the name and address of the person to who results should be sent, to one of the above laboratories. Contact the individual laboratories ahead of time for submission forms and to make arrangements for payment and result notification.