

# Public Health Notes

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*NH DHHS Mission Statement: To join communities and families in providing opportunities for citizens to achieve health and independence.*

## Rabies Safety

They may be cute and cuddly, but wild animals pose some serious health risks to people, especially rabies. Rabies is an acute viral illness that attacks the nervous system. It is a disease passed from animal to animal through contact with infected saliva or other infectious material (such as brain tissue). Most commonly, this occurs as a result of a bite from an infected animal. People can get rabies through bites or scratches and sometimes through bodily fluids, such as saliva or brain tissue, being introduced into the eyes, nose, mouth, or open wounds. If untreated in humans, rabies is almost always fatal.

In New Hampshire, rabies is most often found in skunks, foxes, raccoons, and other meat-eating animals, as well as bats. However, it is important to remember that any mammal can be infected with and transmit rabies, including domestic animals such as dogs and cats. It is not always easy to tell if an animal is rabid.

Contrary to what is commonly believed, not all rabid animals walk funny, foam at the mouth and drool. Animals may stagger, appear restless, be aggressive, appear very friendly, seem to be choking, or they may show no symptoms at all.

The symptoms of rabies in people progress rapidly and include anxiety, confusion, hallucinations, and the inability to swallow.



## Important Dates

September is Leukemia and Lymphoma Awareness Month  
September is National Cholesterol Education Month  
September is National Newborn Screening Awareness Month  
September is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month  
September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month  
September is Whole Grains Month  
September is National Preparedness Month  
September 19 is Get Ready Day  
September 21 is World Alzheimer's Day  
September 28 is World Rabies Day  
September 30 is World Heart Day  
October is Eye Injury Prevention Month  
October is Home Eye Safety Month  
October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month  
October is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness Month  
October is Mental Illness Awareness Month  
October 5 is Walk to School Day  
October 6 is National Depression Screening Day  
October 16 is World Food Day  
October 23-31 is Red Ribbon Week



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There are precautions people should take to reduce their risk of exposure to rabies:

- Vaccinate your pets. A vaccine is available for dogs, cats, ferrets, cattle, horses, and sheep.
- Stay away from stray animals.
- Avoid contact with all wildlife. Even innocent-appearing young animals can be positive for rabies.
- Discourage wild animals from dining near your home. Do not leave pet food outdoors and secure garbage can lids. Do not feed wild animals, such as raccoons, foxes, and skunks.
- Teach children to stay away from wild animals and pets other than their own.
- Don't touch dead animals. If absolutely necessary, wear rubber or latex gloves.
- If you are exposed to rabies or think you might have been, seek medical advice immediately! Don't wait for symptoms to develop or it may be too late for treatment.

For more information, visit NH Fish & Game at [www.wildlife.state.nh.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us), the CDC at [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies), or call the NH DHHS, Division of Public Health Services, Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496.

## Vaccines for the Start of School

The new school year is starting! That means new clothes, new school supplies, and new teachers. There is one more thing kids should get before they head back to school: their vaccines. There is no better way to protect your children from potentially deadly contagious diseases than immunization.

Preventable illnesses such as whooping cough are on the rise throughout the country. New Hampshire law requires that elementary school children be vaccinated against nine communicable diseases including: diph-



theria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, and chickenpox. You can take these important steps to make sure your child is protected:

- Call your child's medical provider
- Ensure your child's vaccinations are up-to-date
- Schedule an appointment for needed vaccinations
- Get two copies of your child's immunization records (one for you and one for the school nurse or other school officials).

All vaccines in New Hampshire for children under age 19 are free. Make sure your child has a productive and safe school year. For more information, visit the DHHS Immunization Program at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov) or call them at 603-271-4482.

## Occupational Illness and Injury Report Released

The report *Occupational Illness and Injury in New Hampshire: A Status Report, Data to Inform Programs and Policies, 2011* is now available for use by state, community, and local public health agencies. This report provides updated data on many areas affecting the health of New Hampshire's workers including work-related injuries, fatalities, hospitalizations and workers' compensation awards. This is an update from the previous report published in 2009.

"This comprehensive report looks at the core occupational health indicators of work-related injuries and illnesses," said Dr. José Montero, Director of Public Health at the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. "The report contains some important data and we hope it will be useful to our partners and the people of New Hampshire in preventing such injuries in the future."

The data in the report indicate several trends, including:

- Manufacturing industries are on the decrease in New Hampshire
- From 2000–2008 there were 127 work-related fatalities in New Hampshire
- In NH, between 2002 and 2007, 6% of all

Emergency Department discharges of patients age 16 and older, were paid for by workers' compensation, compared to the US as a whole, where only 2% of ED discharges of patients age 16 and older were paid for by workers' compensation.

- More than 47,000 New Hampshire workers are employed in high mortality risk occupations.
- More than 78,000 New Hampshire workers are employed in high mortality risk industries.

To read the report or download it, go to [www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/hsdm/ohs/publications.htm](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/hsdm/ohs/publications.htm).

## Get Ready Day and National Preparedness Month

September is National Preparedness Month, which was designated to raise awareness about preparing for a disaster. You never know when a flood, a disease outbreak, or even a tornado will happen, so it is important that everyone prepare themselves and their families as much as possible in advance.

According to the 2007 New Hampshire Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), only 20.7% of households said they had a written disaster evacuation plan; only 54% of households have a three-day supply of water on hand; and 75.8% of respondents said they would rely on a cell phone to communicate with family and friends (which frequently fail immediately after a disaster). One of the most surprising results is that when asked if public authorities announced a mandatory evacuation, would you evacuate, 7% of people said no.

"As we have seen the last few years," said DHHS Emergency Services Unit Director Rick Cricenti, "emergencies can happen anywhere at any time, so it is important for our own sake and the sake of our families that we plan what we are going to do if the unthinkable happens. There are some simple, common sense steps we can all take to be better prepared and the first step is to talk it over with your family."

All residents of New Hampshire are encouraged to make emergency preparations for themselves and their families, including having an evacuation plan, a plan

for communicating with each other if you are separated when an event occurs, and at least a three-day supply of food and water on hand for everyone in the household in case you can't leave home, including baby and pet supplies and basic medications. Some good resources exist at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) and at [www.nh.gov/readynh](http://www.nh.gov/readynh). For a brochure on what to do to get ready entitled "Preparing for an Emergency: The Smart Thing to Do," go to [http://www.nh.gov/readynh/documents/emergency\\_planning\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.nh.gov/readynh/documents/emergency_planning_brochure.pdf).



## Preparing an Emergency Kit

Though each household's kit will look somewhat different, your emergency supplies should include:

- At least a three-day supply of drinkable water (one gallon per person per day and don't forget pets)
- Battery- or crank-powered radio
- Flashlights
- Batteries
- First aid kit/basic medications (pain killers, prescriptions, cough medicine)
- Food with a long shelf life (and keep it rotating so it doesn't expire)
- Baby food, formula and diapers if you have a young child
- Pet food and medications if you have pets
- Cell phone with a car charger
- Alternate heating source or a plan of where to go if the power is out for an extended time
- Cash