Immunization protects you from disease. Get protected, get immunized.

- Immune Globulins are needed for fast but short term protection.
- For long term protection, get immunized.

What is Rabies Immune Globulin (RIG)?
RIG is made from blood and contains antibodies to rabies. It provides fast protection but is not long lasting.

When RIG is given, a rabies vaccine series is started so that the body can make its own antibodies for long lasting protection.

Who should have RIG?
You may be offered RIG if you have had an animal bite or if there is a risk you have been in contact with rabies disease.

How many doses of RIG are needed?
You need one dose of RIG as soon as possible after a high risk animal bite. The size of the dose depends on the person’s body weight.

How well does RIG work?
There have been no cases of rabies in Canada after RIG and rabies vaccine were given as recommended. In other countries, there have been cases when RIG and rabies vaccine doses were not given exactly as recommended.

Is RIG safe?
RIG is one of the safest blood products available. Canadian Blood Services carefully screens donors and tests all blood collected. The blood of donors is not used if the donor has known risk factors or tests positive for an infectious disease. RIG is treated with heat and chemicals to kill germs that might be present. The risk of getting an infection from RIG is very small.

Where can I get RIG?
If you have been bitten by an animal or think you may have a risk of rabies, call Health Link at 811.

If RIG and rabies vaccine are needed, they will be given at your local public health office or hospital. It is important to get all doses of rabies vaccine exactly as recommended.

Are there side effects from RIG?
Reactions to RIG are usually mild and go away in a few days. They may include:
- discomfort where the needle was given
- headache
- feeling tired or unwell
- fever

Hives and general swelling may occur

It is important to stay for 15 minutes after RIG is given because people can have a rare but serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). If anaphylaxis happens, you will be given medicine to treat the symptoms.

Unusual reactions can happen. Call Health Link at 811 to report any unusual reactions.
How can I manage side effects?
- To help with discomfort and swelling, put a cool, wet cloth over the area.
- If you need fever or pain medicine, check with your pharmacist or doctor. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 19 years old because it can cause serious health problems.
- Some people with health problems (e.g., weak immune system) must call their doctor whenever they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your doctor—even if you think the fever was due to immunization.

Is there anyone who cannot have RIG?
After a high risk animal bite, anyone can have RIG, but talk to your healthcare provider before having RIG if you:
- have an allergy to parts of the immune globulin—always tell your healthcare provider about allergies.
- had a severe or unusual reaction after this immune globulin (or a similar one)—always tell your healthcare provider if you have had reactions.
- have an IgA deficiency

You can have RIG if you have a mild illness (e.g., cold), even if you have a fever.
RIG can interfere with live vaccines. You need to wait at least 4 months after having RIG before you can have a live vaccine. If you had a live vaccine less than 14 days before having RIG, ask a public health nurse if the live vaccine needs to be repeated.

For More Information
- Call Health Link at 811
- Go to immunizealberta.ca
- Go to myhealth.alberta.ca

Quick Facts: Rabies Disease

What it is
- rabies is caused by a virus that affects the nervous system
- it is usually fatal once symptoms start
- early symptoms (e.g., headache, fever, pain, tiredness) move quickly to confusion, agitation, paralysis, and death
- symptoms can start as early as 9 days or as late as several years after an animal bite or exposure, depending on where and how serious the wound is
- deaths are rare in North America, but worldwide about 55,000 people die from rabies every year

Who is most at risk
People who have close contact with animals and lab workers who handle the rabies virus are at higher risk for exposure to the virus.

The risk for travellers depends on the country, length of the trip, activities, and access to medical care.
Children are higher risk because they are more likely to approach animals and less likely to tell someone if they are bitten or scratched. They are more likely to have higher risk animal bites (e.g., more serious bites, bites on the face)

How it spreads
- spread from the saliva of an infected animal to humans through a bite, scratch or lick on an open wound
- the most common carriers of rabies in Canada are bats, skunks, raccoons, or foxes
- stray dogs are the most common carriers in Asia and Africa, where most rabies deaths happen