

## **Rabies**

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Rabies is among the oldest diseases known to man. It is a zoonosis [is transmitted to man from animals] and is caused by the Lyssavirus [from a word meaning *frenzy*). This RNA virus is prevalent throughout the world and can be carried by any mammal. Despite being an entirely preventable disease, rabies continues to be a significant cause of human and animal deaths, with a conservative estimate of 55,000 human deaths occurring in Africa and Asia each year. It is widely recognized that the global number of human deaths officially reported are greatly underestimated and reliable data indicating the true incidence of human rabies are scarce or non-existent in many countries.

Rabies is primarily a disease of children, who are particularly at risk from this terrible disease, due to their close contact with dogs, and are more likely than adults to suffer multiple bites and scratches to the face and head, both of which carry a higher risk of contracting rabies. Children also are often unaware of the danger that dogs transmit rabies and may not tell their parents when a bite, lick, or scratch has occurred from an infected animal. Once the clinical onset of rabies is apparent, no cure is available, and, with very rare exceptions, death is inevitable. The disease results in horrific clinical signs and human cases cause considerable trauma for all concerned.