What do I do if I am bitten or scratched by an animal?

- Obtain the owner’s contact information (e.g. name, address, phone number), so the animal can be located by Public Health and Emergency Services.
- Wash the area thoroughly with soap and water.
- Call your family doctor or seek medical attention immediately.
- Report the bite or scratch to Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services at 519-575-4400.

What is Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services’ role when an animal bites a human?

When notified of a biting incident, Public Health Inspectors investigate to determine if there is a risk of rabies exposure. When the animal involved is known, the inspector will place the animal under observation for a period of 10 days after the date of biting to ensure rabies was not transmitted at the time of biting.

When the owner of the animal involved is not known or it is a wild animal, the inspector will work with the person exposed and physician to ensure proper post-exposure treatment is available which may include vaccine.

If the animal involved in the exposure incident has since died, the inspector will request that the animal undergo rabies testing.

For more information on Rabies, Lyme Disease or West Nile Virus, call 519-575-4400 (TTY 519-575-4608) and speak to a Public Health Inspector, or visit www.regionofwaterloo.ca/ph

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.

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Lyme Disease

In Ontario, Lyme Disease is caused by the bite of a Black-legged tick (aka deer tick or ixodes scapularis) that is infected with Borrelia burgdorferi.

What are the symptoms?
A circular rash referred to as a “bull’s-eye” rash could be one of the earliest symptoms of an infection. If you develop a “bull’s-eye” rash, fever, chills or extreme fatigue or feel like you have the flu, it’s important to seek medical attention and if known, to tell your doctor when and where you were bitten. Lyme disease can have serious health consequences if left untreated.

Are there ticks in Waterloo Region?
Black-legged ticks are spreading to new areas of the province because of climate change. They can also spread by travelling on migrating birds and deer. While the probability is low, it is possible to find a black-legged tick almost anywhere in Ontario. Ticks are most active in Spring and Summer.

Did you know?
Icaridin (also known as picaridin) derived of natural materials, is the insect repellent that was approved for use by Health Canada in 2012. It is the repellent of choice by the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Canadian Advisory Committee on Tropical Medicine and Travel for children ages six months to 12 years of age.

West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a virus mainly transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes transmit the virus after becoming infected by feeding on the blood of birds that carry the virus.

What are the symptoms?
Most people who are infected with the virus show no symptoms or they experience mild flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache, body aches or fatigue. The symptoms usually last for a few days. Call your doctor immediately if you notice any symptoms.

Fact

- Rabid animals may be found in Waterloo Region.
- All animal bites should be reported to Public Health and Emergency Services. Physicians who treat your injury must report the incident to Public Health and Emergency Services.
- If untreated, rabies infection is almost always fatal in animals and humans.
- West Nile Virus is spread by travelling on migrating birds and deer.
- Black-legged ticks are spreading to new areas of the province because of climate change.
- Ticks are most active in Spring and Summer.

Fact

- Ticks are tiny! Before they feed, they are the size of a sesame seed.
- Ticks can’t jump or fly. They prefer wooded and bushy areas with high grass and plenty of leaves on the ground. They wait on low vegetation and then attach to hosts that pass by.
- Hungry ticks can be deterred!
- The longer a tick is attached to your body, the higher the risk of infection with Lyme Disease. If a tick is attached to your skin for less than 24 hours, your chance of getting Lyme Disease is small.

West Nile Virus

If you think you may have any of the illnesses above, or have been bitten by an animal, contact your doctor immediately and inform Public Health and Emergency Services at 519-575-4400.