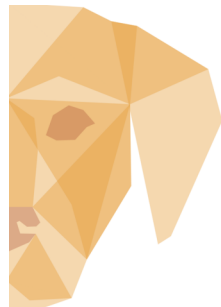




EPI WATCH

Monthly Epidemiology Newsletter



RABIES: FACTS

NOT FEAR

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Division of Disease Control and Health Protection

Disease Reporting

To report diseases and clusters of illness:

Phone: (727) 824-6932

Fax: (727) 484-3865

(excluding HIV/AIDS)

To report HIV/AIDS by mail:

Surveillance Room 3-138

205 Dr. MLK Jr St. N

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World Rabies Day

by Daniel Joyce, MPH

World Rabies Day is on September 28 and the theme this year is “Rabies: Facts, not Fear.” This theme is directed towards dispelling myths about rabies and emphasizing facts to better prevent rabies.

Rabies is an RNA virus in the *Rhabdoviridae* family and is part of the genus *Lyssavirus*. Rabies is transmitted when broken skin, wounds, or mucous membranes come into contact with saliva from an infected animal. The virus travels from the bite site to the brain by moving within nerves, multiplies, and moves into the salivary glands. This process can take weeks to months and is known as the incubation period. The initial symptoms are nonspecific, such as fatigue and fever, and last between two to 10 days. The symptoms progress to neurologic involvement like hallucinations, paralysis, and odd behavior that last hours to days. Then the coma begins and can last for hours to months before causing death.

Wildlife are the main rabies reservoirs in Florida and raccoons, bats, foxes, and stray cats account for majority of the animals that test positive. Raccoons accounted for 40% of the animals that tested positive for rabies while bats accounted for 17.5% in 2020. However, all mammals can become infected with rabies, including domestic pets. While dogs make up only 1% of rabid animals reported each year in the United States, two have tested positive for rabies so far in Florida in 2021.

One of the best ways to prevent rabies is to keep your pet’s rabies vaccinations up to date and spay or neuter them. You can also inform animal control about stray animals in your neighborhood and have them removed since they may be ill or unvaccinated. People can avoid rabies by staying away from wildlife such as raccoons, bats, and foxes, and other commonly affected animals.

It’s important to seek medical attention if you’ve been bitten or scratched by wildlife or unfamiliar animals. Immediate wound cleansing should be performed and has been shown to reduce the likelihood of rabies. Animal attacks often require medical attention, and your doctor will help you decide if rabies Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is needed. Under most circumstances, rabies PEP should be initiated after exposure to wildlife. Rabies PEP consists of one dose of immune globulin that is injected into the wound site, and four doses of rabies vaccine over a 14-day period. If there is ever a concern about rabies or a possible rabies exposure you should contact your healthcare provider.

For more information, please visit [World Rabies Day](#) or [CDC Rabies](#)

For information on rabies in Florida, please visit [Florida Health Rabies](#)

Guidance for Clinicians Caring for Individuals Recently Evacuated from Afghanistan

The United States is currently in the process of resettling approximately 124,000 people that were recently evacuated from Afghanistan. Many of these people came from areas with limited healthcare access and low vaccination coverage. Additionally, during the evacuation process, they have been living in close quarters, increasing the risk for the spread of infectious diseases.

As of September 20, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been notified of 16 cases of measles and 4 cases of mumps among recent evacuees, both Afghan nationals and United States citizens. Evacuation flights from Safe Havens to the U.S. have temporarily been halted to facilitate the administration of the MMR vaccine and post-vaccine quarantine. The CDC has requested that all evacuees be vaccinated and quarantined for 21 days before leaving for the U.S.



Due to the ongoing transmission of measles in Afghanistan combined with relatively low vaccine coverage, the CDC anticipates additional measles cases among evacuees. Additionally, evacuees are also at an increased risk for gastrointestinal infections like shigellosis, giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis, hepatitis A, rotavirus, and viral diarrheal diseases. There have also been reports of cases of varicella, tuberculosis, malaria, leishmaniasis, hepatitis A, and COVID-19 among evacuees. Certain measures, such as personal hygiene, elimination of crowding, mask wearing, and a safe food and water supply will reduce or eliminate the risk for many of these diseases. However, the CDC recommends that all evacuees should be up to date on vaccinations including MMR, varicella, polio, COVID-19, and seasonal influenza.

Clinicians should immediately notify DOH-Pinellas or their local health department upon suspicion of any case of measles. Reporting requirements for the state of Florida can be found here: [Reportable Diseases/Conditions in Florida](#)

To read the entire guidance document, please visit [CDC Health Alert Network](#)

Increase in Cannabis Products Containing Delta-8 THC

by Holly Clancy, CHES

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a health advisory on September 14 regarding an increase in availability of cannabis products containing delta-8 THC coinciding with increased adverse health effects. The increase in product availability occurred when an oversupply of cannabidiol (CBD) was extracted from US-grown hemp, causing the price of CBD to plummet. CBD producers experimented with various methods to convert CBD into delta-8 THC in hopes of making a profit from the surplus. Due to lack of regulation and oversight in the production and limited laboratory testing, most products containing delta-8 THC also contain other unadvertised agents that can have repercussions on one's health.

One main by-product of synthesizing CBD into delta-8 THC is delta-9 THC, the strand that is well-known for cannabis' psychoactive effects. There are other reaction by-products that can be produced depending on the acids, metal catalysts, and bases used in the synthesization process. Many of these by-products contain heavy metals, solvents, or pesticides that have adverse health effects. Each producer may be using different reagents and methods to create delta-8 THC, and consumers may falsely believe that each delta-8 THC product is made the same way.

Due to the lack of regulation, there is no age limit to purchase these products. Additionally, many consumables such as gummies, chocolates, and candies appeal to children and can lead to unintentional exposure if children mistake them for ordinary treats. Between January 1 and July 31, there were 661 exposures reported to national poison control centers. Out of those 661 cases, 41% were unintentional exposures to delta-8-THC and 77% of those involved persons less than 18 years old. 18% of cases required hospitalization, including children that required being admitted into intensive care units (ICU). Symptoms of delta-8 THC intoxication are similar to delta-9 THC, which include, but are not limited to lethargy, slurred speech, uncoordinated movements and decreased psychomotor activity, low blood pressure, sedation, or coma

If adverse side effects of THC or CBD-related products are suspected and causing imminent danger to their health, they should:

- Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department
- Contact their regional local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222.
- Report to FDA's MedWatch Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting Program. The Florida phone number to submit a report is 866-337-6272.

For more information about marijuana and public health, visit [CDC Marijuana and Public Health](#)

For more information on Delta-8 THC and reporting adverse events, please visit [FDA 5 Things to Know About Delta-8 Tetrahydrocannabinol– Delta-8 THC](#)

Select Reportable Diseases in Pinellas County

Disease	Pinellas		YTD Total		Pinellas Annual Totals		
	August 2021	August 2020	Pinellas 2021	Florida 2021	2020	2019	2018
A. Vaccine Preventable							
Measles	0	0	0	0	0	1	7
Mumps	1	0	2	23	1	7	10
Pertussis	0	0	1	33	8	27	32
Varicella	2	1	20	218	18	33	67
B. CNS Diseases & Bacteremias							
Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD)	0	0	1	14	0	3	1
Meningitis (Bacterial, Cryptococcal, Mycotic)	1	1	3	50	6	7	9
Meningococcal Disease	0	0	1	13	3	1	1
C. Enteric Infections							
Campylobacteriosis	14	25	158	2656	252	310	264
Cryptosporidiosis	4	5	22	201	44	64	34
Cyclosporiasis	0	5	9	222	9	28	4
<i>E. coli</i> Shiga Toxin (+)	4	1	14	415	10	24	15
Giardiasis	2	2	17	389	28	52	41
Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS)	0	0	0	3	0	1	0
Listeriosis	0	1	2	34	2	2	1
Salmonellosis	18	16	88	3484	176	201	233
Shigellosis	5	2	25	298	19	22	40
D. Viral Hepatitis							
Hepatitis A	0	0	1	142	4	377	113
Hepatitis B: Pregnant Woman	0	1	4	211	40	24	14
Hepatitis B, Acute	5	2	36	307	103	72	52
Hepatitis C, Acute	9	10	52	824	18	82	40
E. Vector Borne/ Zoonoses							
Animal Rabies	0	0	0	58	1	2	1
Rabies, possible exposure	15	10	96	2383	128	128	130
Chikungunya Fever	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Dengue	0	0	0	10	0	3	0
Eastern Equine Encephalitis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lyme Disease	1	5	4	162	11	22	14
Malaria	2	0	2	27	2	5	3
West Nile Virus	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Zika Virus Disease	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
F. Others							
Chlamydia	351	362	2782	n/a	3982	4588	4422
Gonorrhea	157	164	1299	n/a	1640	1537	1439
Hansen's Disease	0	0	0	8	0	0	0
Legionellosis	3	1	26	570	35	43	37
Mercury Poisoning	0	0	2	11	1	1	1
Syphilis, Total	45	46	395	n/a	469	479	438
Syphilis, Primary and Secondary	21	23	176	n/a	224	213	190
Syphilis, Early Latent	16	20	145	n/a	161	191	158
Syphilis, Congenital	0	0	2	n/a	5	6	2
Syphilis, Late Syphilis	8	3	72	n/a	89	69	88
Tuberculosis	2	3	14	n/a	24	23	33
<i>Vibrio</i> Infections	1	2	10	167	12	18	6

*YTD up to August 31, 2021. n/a = not available at this time

Reportable diseases include confirmed and probable cases only. All case counts are current and provisional. Data is collected from the Merlin Reportable Disease database, surveillance systems maintained at the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County, and Florida CHARTS <http://www.floridacharts.com/charts/default.aspx>. STD data in STARS is continually updated. Please note, data from the previous month takes up to an additional month or more to be correctly updated.