

NOTIFIABLE MEDICAL CONDITIONS (NMC) CASE DEFINITIONS FLIPCHART

Category 1: Immediate reporting telephonically followed by written or electronic notification within 24hrs of diagnosing a case

RABIES (HUMAN)

Why is surveillance necessary?	Who must notify and when?	Suspected case definition	Probable case definition	Confirmed case definition
<p>Rabies virus is transmitted through the saliva of infected mammals including dogs, mongoose, cats, jackal, cattle and goats. After a variable incubation period (2 weeks to years), the rabies virus causes dysfunction of the nervous system resulting in encephalitis, coma and death. There is no treatment but rabies post-exposure prophylaxis may prevent cases in persons who have been exposed.</p> <p>Cases of rabies should be notified, as canine rabies is endemic in South Africa, and human exposures are frequent. Following notification of a case, investigations should ensure to determine why post exposure prophylaxis was not correctly administered, and identify additional persons at risk. Veterinary control measures should also be implemented.</p>	<p>The clinician who suspects the diagnosis should notify the case as soon as it meets the clinical case definition.</p> <p>Laboratory confirmation is not required before notification of the case.</p>	<p>A person presenting with an acute neurological syndrome (encephalitis) dominated by forms of hyperactivity (furious rabies) or paralytic syndromes (dumb rabies) progressing towards coma and death, usually by respiratory failure, within 7-10 days after the first symptom if no intensive care is instituted.</p>	<p>A probable case is a suspected case WITH a likely exposure to a suspected rabid animal.</p>	<p>A confirmed case is a person with laboratory evidence of rabies infection by detection of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Rabies virus nucleic acid by RT-PCR on saliva, skin biopsy or cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) <p>OR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-rabies antibodies in CSF (ante-mortem); <p>OR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Rabies virus antigen in brain tissue by fluorescent antibody testing or rabies virus nucleic acid in skin biopsy (post mortem).
<p>Additional notes</p> <p>Negative saliva tests for rabies do not rule out the diagnosis. If the diagnosis is not confirmed through laboratory tests done ante-mortem, a post-mortem brain biopsy should be done. Instructions for specimen collection are found on the NICD website (see below). Human rabies statistics are based on year of exposure and infection and may differ from year of case notification.</p>				
<p>Additional resources</p> <p>Additional resources for rabies including instructions for specimen collection, rabies prevention guidelines, a rabies FAQ, may be found at https://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/rabies/</p>				