**What you need to know about bats**

As more people head outdoors across Interior Health, it is likely they may encounter bats. Bats can carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans. In BC, 4-8% of bats that come into contact with people test positive for the rabies virus. In 2021, 132 people in the region were treated for potential exposure to rabies.

Treatment, which involves a 2-week long period of vaccinations, should be administered as soon as possible after exposure. Without treatment, rabies is almost always fatal. Avoid handling bats with your bare hands to prevent bites or scratches, particularly children, who tend to find bats on the ground and play with them. Anyone who has been bitten or scratched by a bat should seek medical attention immediately.

Precautions to protect yourself:

• Don't touch live or dead bats, talk to your children about not touching bats lying on the ground as these creatures may be potentially sick.

• Make your residence “bat proof.” Keep doors and windows closed, make sure window screens don’t have any holes and keep attic vents properly screened and openings closed.

• If you find a live bat in a room of your home, open the window and close interior doors until the bat leaves.

• Seek professional bat-control advice (from a pest control or wildlife specialist) if your home is inhabited by bats.

• Avoid locations where bats are likely to be found (e.g. caves).

• Vaccinate your pets against rabies.

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