



Veterinary Technology Department
Natural and Health Sciences
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To: All Incoming Veterinary Technology Students
From: Megan Moore, DVM
Department Chair, Veterinary Technology Program
Re: Mandatory Rabies Vaccination Policy

Welcome to the Veterinary Technology Program at SUNY Westchester Community College.

Students in the Veterinary Technology program are required to obtain pre-exposure rabies vaccination prior to beginning their curriculum. Rabies is a viral disease with close to 100% mortality rate in people or animals that contract this disease. The program's curriculum exposes students to a variety of animals in different settings for hands-on clinical experience and in many cases students may come in contact with animals that may have not been vaccinated against rabies or that have unknown vaccination histories.

Immunization for rabies consists of a series of three vaccines administered over a **three-week** period (Day 0, 7, and 21 or 28). The estimated cost for the series of rabies vaccines is approximately \$1500.00 (price varies year to year based on the supplier).

Options to obtain the pre-exposure rabies vaccination series include:

- **Vaccine clinic provided through Passport Health held on Westchester Community College Valhalla Campus in August**
- Contact a local pharmacy and see if they would administer the vaccination if prescribed by your primary care physician
- Contact a local travel clinic
- Contact a local public health unit

Required upon entry into the program, accepted students must provide an Immunization Certificate as proof of pre-exposure Rabies Vaccination completion. Failure to provide this documentation may result in dismissal from the program.

Guidance from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) is as follows:

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/one-health/rabies-pre-exposure-vaccination-and-titers-veterinarians>

Rabies exposure is an **occupational hazard for veterinary professionals**, and preventive measures are necessary to protect the veterinary team. Pre-exposure rabies vaccination provides additional protection for at-risk veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and other team members. But vaccination

doesn't replace good preventive measures such as [personal protective equipment](#), and safe procedures for animal and specimen handling.

Veterinarians and veterinary support staff are in the frequent-risk group with regard to rabies exposure and should be administered pre-exposure rabies vaccinations, according to [recommendations](#) of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians' [Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions for Zoonotic Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel](#) indicates that all team members with animal contact must be vaccinated against rabies, followed by periodic titer checks and rabies vaccine boosters, in accordance with the ACIP recommendations.

Benefits of pre-exposure rabies vaccination for the veterinary team:

Pre-exposure rabies vaccination **does not eliminate the need for additional treatment after a rabies exposure**. But it eliminates the need for post-exposure rabies immunoglobulin administration and decreases the number of post-exposure doses of vaccine needed. Pre-exposure prophylaxis also may provide protection if post-exposure rabies treatment is delayed or if rabies exposure is unrecognized.

The active antibody response develops in approximately 7–10 days, and detectable rabies virus neutralizing antibodies generally persist for several years. The duration of protection varies, so regular titers are necessary to assess the need for a booster vaccination. According to the ACIP guidelines: “Although virus neutralizing antibody levels might not definitively determine a person’s susceptibility or protection from a rabies virus exposure, titers in persons at risk for exposure are used to monitor the relative rabies immune status over time. To ensure the presence of a primed immune response over time among persons at higher than normal risk for exposure, titers should be checked periodically, with booster doses administered only as needed.”

Pre-exposure rabies vaccine administration:

Pre-exposure rabies vaccination with either the human diploid cell vaccine (HDCV) or the purified chick embryo cell vaccine (PCEC) is administered intramuscularly in the deltoid area of the arm in a schedule of three injections, with one injection per day on days 0, 7, and 21 or 28. ***Failure to complete the series puts you at risk of incomplete protection if exposed to rabies.***

Pre-exposure vaccination for veterinarians, veterinary technicians or others on the veterinary team can be ordered by a physician or arranged through your local or state health department. Insurance coverage varies, so ask your provider whether your policy includes coverage, either full or partial.

Additional resources:

[Help control rabies](#)

[ACIP Recommendations on Human Rabies Prevention - 2008 \(PDF\)](#)

[Should my staff and I be vaccinated? \(CDC\)](#)

[Pre-exposure vaccinations \(CDC\)](#)

[Rabies vaccination \(WHO\)](#)