

## **RABIES IN INDIA**

### **Why you should be vaccinated for rabies.**

Once symptoms of the disease develop, rabies is nearly always fatal. Bites by rabid domestic dogs cause 99% of human rabies deaths – *WHO Rabies Fact Sheet, September 2011*

Roughly 36% of the world's rabies deaths occur in India each year, most of those when children come into contact with infected dogs -- *Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 2009*

India has one of the highest numbers of cases of rabies in the world, with estimates of 30,000–50,000 human cases per year. Dogs roam in packs in all areas of the country. Unfortunately, human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) is not readily available in India, so if someone has not received a pre-exposure rabies vaccination, a bite may result in the traveler having to leave the country for post-exposure prophylaxis – *CDC Yellow Book 2012*.

***Anyone planning to come to India should first receive a rabies vaccination.***

### **What if you are bitten by a stray dog?**

If you receive a bite, it will be assumed that you have been exposed to rabies. That's because there is no reliable way to test dogs for rabies. You will need post-exposure treatment.

Treatment should begin with immediate thorough cleansing of all wounds for at least 15 minutes with soap and water. If available, use a virucidal agent such as povidone iodine solutions to irrigate the wounds. Complete this treatment before you call anyone or go anywhere.

After cleaning the wounds, call the health unit and/or go to the closest hospital for evaluation and treatment.

If you have **not been previously vaccinated** you must:

- Receive **human rabies immunoglobulin (HRIG) injections directly into the wound**, ideally within 72 hours of being bitten. However, because HRIG is not readily available in India, you will likely have to go to the Mumbai or Delhi Health Units in order to receive it promptly.
- **You will also need a course of the rabies vaccine.**

If you **have been previously immunized** you will:

- Only need to repeat the vaccine series as soon as possible after the bite. HRIG is not required. The vaccine is readily available in India, even in rural areas.

### **How many shots are required for the vaccine?**

The rabies vaccination consists of three injections given over a month period.