



Philadelphia Department of Public Health
Division of Disease Control

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Health Update

Human Rabies Vaccine Supply: Update for Healthcare Providers November 21, 2008

Access to human rabies vaccine has improved in recent weeks, thanks to controlled usage of available supplies of rabies vaccine, and less overall demand for its use nationwide. Novartis (manufacturer of RabAvert) is now able to provide vaccine for post-exposure prophylaxis without restrictions, although production shortages of IMOVAX at Sanofi Pasteur's manufacturing facility are expected through the spring of 2009. There is no shortage of human rabies immune globulin (HRIG).

- Both human rabies vaccines are currently available for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) on a per patient basis. RabAvert can be ordered through Novartis distributors without a password. IMOVAX can be ordered directly from Sanofi Pasteur with a password issued by public health department staff following an exposure risk assessment. It is anticipated that there will be a password required for purchase of IMOVAX through mid-2009.
- Novartis will also provide rabies vaccine for pre-exposure prophylaxis on a limited basis only, for persons at higher occupational exposure risk in the United States (e.g., rabies diagnostic workers, veterinary staff, animal control workers, wildlife workers, etc.). Pre-exposure orders may be placed with the Novartis Wholesale Distributor and there is no need for a form or password. Vaccine for general pre-exposure use (e.g., travelers, etc.) is not currently available.
- Decision-making regarding the need for rabies PEP should be guided by the following considerations:
 - Bites from known or suspect rabid animals are the highest risk for rabies. Whenever possible, wild animals (e.g., raccoons, bats, skunks, foxes, groundhogs, woodchucks, etc.) that were involved in human exposures should be tested for rabies.
 - Bites from healthy, domestic animals are at lower risk for rabies. Every effort should be made to observe these animals (e.g., dogs, cats, ferrets) involved in bite cases for 10 days, before administering rabies post-exposure prophylaxis. When animal bites are reported to DDC (24/7 telephone line for routine reporting: 215-685-6748), DDC forwards information regarding the animal to the PDPH Vector Control Program for animal follow-up, if the animal's location and owner information are reported with the bite.
- The two manufacturers of human rabies vaccines in the United States are:
 - Purified chick embryo cell culture (RabAvert), Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics
Telephone number: (800) 244-7668; <http://www.novartisvaccines.com/products/travel.shtml>
(The Novartis product identification number has changed from 53905-501-01 to 63851-501-01.)
 - Human diploid cell vaccine (IMOVAX Rabies), Sanofi Pasteur
Telephone number: (800) 822-2463 (800 VACCINE); <http://www.imovax.com>
- The manufacturers of human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) in the United States are:
 - IMOGAM RABIES-Ht, Sanofi Pasteur
Telephone number: (800) 822-2463 (800 VACCINE); <http://www.imovax.com>
 - HyperRAB, Talecris Biotherapeutics
Telephone number: (800) 243-4153 or (800) 520-2807;
<http://www.talecris.com/us/talecris-us-hyperrab.htm>

For public health consultation and reporting of diseases requiring immediate public health notification, contact DDC at 215-685-6740. On weekends and after normal business hours, call 215-686-1776 and ask to speak with the person on-call for the Division of Disease Control.