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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **HOW TO CATCH A BAT AND AVOID RABIES SHOTS**

The start of summer is when young bats begin to fly and may find their way into your home, where they may make contact with you or a family member, even while you sleep.

To avoid the need for prolonged rabies treatment, the Westchester County Health Department wants you to know how to safely catch a bat. If the bat is caught and does not have rabies, you and your family members can avoid unneeded treatment.

For each of the past five years, about 300 Westchester residents have required rabies treatment after being exposed to bats that were not caught for testing. In most cases, treatment could have been avoided if the bat had been caught and tested for rabies. Whenever a bat is found in a room with a sleeping person or a mentally impaired person or with a young child or pet, contact with the bat must be suspected and it is essential to call the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000.

To help you learn how to capture a bat that may have been in contact with a human or a pet, the New York State Health Department has produced an instructional video. This 80-second video can be seen on the New York State Health Department website and a link is also available to it from the Westchester County Health Department website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).

Here's how to safely catch a bat:

1. Close windows and doors so the bat cannot escape.
2. Wear thick gloves and grab a container (such as a coffee can), a piece of cardboard and some tape.
3. Wait until the bat has settled on a wall.
4. Place the container over the bat, trapping it against the wall.

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5. Slide the cardboard between the wall and container to trap the bat inside.
6. Tape the cardboard to the container.
7. Call the Health Department at (914) 813-5000 for advice on submitting the bat for testing.

Another favorite place for bats to hang out is inside your closed patio umbrella, so beware when you open it.

“Rabies can be transmitted to humans through the bite or scratch of an infected animal or even by contact with the animal’s saliva through an open wound. Rabies is a fatal disease unless treatment is begun before the onset of symptoms, which can take from a month to a year to develop,” said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. “Once symptoms occur, the disease is fatal, which is why it is so important to test the animal or be treated for rabies as a precaution.”

Bats with rabies have been found in all 62 counties in New York. Approximately 1 in 33 bats have rabies. Since it is possible to be bitten or scratched by a bat without being aware of it, bats present the greatest rabies concern for humans in New York State.

Of the 41 human rabies cases in the United States since 1990, 38 were the result of contact with bats. For this reason, anyone having contact or suspected contact with a bat must be treated for rabies unless the bat can be tested.

For more information on rabies, call the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000, or visit our website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).