



## MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Your public health team, connecting with our communities to achieve healthier outcomes

Submitted by: Leslie Kinnee, Public Information Officer  
615 N. State St., Stanton, MI 48888-9702  
989-831-3669, [kinnee@mmdhd.org](mailto:kinnee@mmdhd.org)

[www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org)



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### **Be cautious around bats**

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns~ Spring has finally sprung, which means it's time for Mid-Michigan District Health Department's annual bat safety reminder.

There is no need to panic at the site of a bat, but they are the most common animal in Michigan to transmit rabies, a disease that is fatal if untreated, so it's important to be cautious.

First and foremost, if you are bitten by a bat, seek medical attention right away.

If a bite occurs; or if a bat has been found in the room of a sleeping person, in the room of an unattended child, or near a mentally impaired or intoxicated person, it may need to be tested for rabies. In order to be tested, a bat's head must be kept intact, so hitting it with any type of object, like a tennis racket, is not advised.

Capturing a bat isn't as difficult as you may think. The first step is to make sure not to touch it with your bare skin (leather work gloves are ideal). Have a small box or coffee can, a piece of cardboard and tape ready. When the bat lands, approach it slowly. Place the box or coffee can over the bat and slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Tape the cardboard securely to the container. To see a video demonstration on safe bat capture, visit [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org).

Once you have captured the bat, contact the health department at 989-227-3111 in Clinton County, 989-875-1019 in Gratiot County, or 989-831-3615 in Montcalm County for further instructions and to find out if the bat needs to be tested. Please, do not bring a bat to the health department without calling first.

Be sure to bat-proof your home by replacing any loose soffits, flashings, eaves and siding. Also cover roof vents with screens, make sure all doors shut tightly with no gaps, and that window screens are not damaged or torn.

Bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes, and unvaccinated cats and dogs are all likely rabies carriers. To help protect yourself and loved ones from rabies, avoid approaching or touching any wild or stray animal. And remember, if you are bitten by a bat or other wild or stray animal, contact your health care provider immediately.

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

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