

NSW man dies from 'rabies-like' lyssavirus after bat bite

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<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-03/nsw-man-dies-lyssavirus-bitten-by-bat/105490606>



Lyssavirus is a rare disease spread by bats. (Supplied: Craig Greer)

A northern New South Wales man has died after contracting the state's first confirmed case of Australian bat lyssavirus.

The news comes after NSW Health issued a statement on Wednesday that the man, in his 50s, had received treatment after a bat bit him several months ago.

It said there was no effective treatment once symptoms of the virus appeared and an investigation was underway to establish if other exposures or factors contributed to the man's infection.

It is the fourth case recorded in Australia.

NSW Health describes lyssavirus as a "rabies-like infection" that affects the central nervous system.

It is transmitted from infected bats to humans via a bite or scratch.

NSW Health is warning people not to touch bats.



NSW Health is warning people not to handle bats. (Supplied: Bob Bullen)

Transmission 'rare'

Trish Paterson, a wildlife carer for more than 30 years who ran the Australian Bat Clinic and Wildlife Trauma Centre in Queensland, said bat-to-human transmission of the disease was "very rare".

"Once you get it you pretty much die and that's why we as carers have the vaccination," she said.

"But if you don't touch [a] bat, you can't get bitten or scratched.

"There's no other way to get lyssavirus other than [from] a bite or a scratch."



Trish Paterson has long experience caring for wildlife, including bats. (Supplied: Trish Paterson)

Ms Paterson said it was worrying that the man had been treated for a bat bite but still developed the disease.

"If he received treatment [directly after the bite] and still contracted the virus, that would be a little bit concerning," she said.

NSW Health says if someone is bitten by a bat, urgent medical assessment is crucial.

It says people often require treatment with rabies immunoglobulin and the rabies vaccine.

In Australia, 118 people required medical assessment after they were bitten or scratched by bats last year.

The virus has been found in species of flying foxes, fruit bats and insect-eating microbats.