

# World Rabies Day: ITM investigates better vaccines

28 September is the 10th World Rabies Day.

26-09-16



Dit is de omschrijving

**Rabies is responsible for more than 60.000 deaths a year, mostly young children in Africa and Asia. However, it is a disease that is entirely preventable through vaccination of children and dogs. The World Health Organization wants to eradicate rabies globally by 2030. ITM supports this objective through its research into improved vaccination schedules.**

Rabies is a fatal disease caused by an infection with the rabies virus, usually through a bite from an animal infected with rabies. Belgium is rabies free since 2001. [In Africa and Asia, however, this disease is extremely common.](#) Bite wounds should be washed thoroughly with soap and water for 15 minutes as the virus is extremely sensitive to detergents, followed by treatment with disinfectants. Medical attention for further care and possible post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP or vaccination) should be sought out as soon as possible.

ITM recommends preventive vaccination for those planning adventurous travels or regular visits to risk countries (like in Africa or Asia). This provides partial protection against infection. This provides partial protection against infection by priming the immune system and making it "boostable", but revaccination is required after any bite. The number of required vaccinations is lower when renewing and antibodies do not have to be added. Rabies vaccination is not simple and requires three shots at three different times (day 1, day 7 and day 28) to build up protection against the disease.

ITM and the Ministry of Defense jointly carry out research into easier rabies vaccination schedules since 2011. Shorter schedules of one week or even one day, with subcutaneous vaccination techniques and mini doses, seem to yield good results. These kinds of methods may also offer cheaper solutions for developing countries where the disease claims most victims. The final results of these studies are expected by 2017. In a next phase ITM will carry out trials on babies and young children in Africa where most of the fatalities occur.

Dr. Patrick Soentjens of the ITM travel clinic: "Rabies is a silent killer. In developing countries thousands fall victim annually to an entirely preventable disease. The awareness that rabies exists and can be prevented is an important step in the right direction. Although rabies has fortunately been eradicated in Belgium, travelers to risk countries need to be vaccinated and get proper information about what to do in case they are bitten by a potentially infected animal."