



After you get the Smallpox Vaccine

## Protecting pets and other animals

### About the Smallpox Vaccine

The smallpox vaccine does not contain smallpox virus, but it does contain a live virus called vaccinia. If you receive a smallpox vaccination, you can spread the virus from your vaccination site until the vaccination area is completely healed- usually in about four weeks. Until that time, you need to take precautions to avoid infecting yourself (such as your eyes or mouth) or others who come in close or intimate contact with you.

Some pets and other animals may also be susceptible to the vaccinia virus; a few simple precautions will help prevent spreading the virus to them as well.

### Protecting Pets and Other Animals

Animals differ in their risk of illness from exposure to the vaccinia virus. The best way to protect all pets and other animals is to follow these common-sense guidelines until your vaccination site is completely healed:

- Do not let animals sniff or have any direct contact with your vaccination site.
- Do not let animals have any contact with bandages, clothing, towels, or other materials that touched the vaccination site or the scab.
- Keep pets out of the room when you are changing bandages.
- Before allowing your pet back into the room, wrap up the bandage materials and put them somewhere your pet cannot reach:
  - Place used bandages and gauze in a plastic zippered bag before throwing them away. You should do the same with your scab when it falls off.
  - Cover trash containers tightly and keep animals away from them.
  - Use normal laundering (hot water with detergent or bleach) to wash clothing, towels, or other materials that touched the vaccination site.
- Wash your hands after touching the vaccination site or other things that have touched the site, such as bandages or clothing.
- Wash your hands before touching anything else, including your eyes, skin, or pets.
- Before handling “pocket pets” such as guinea pigs, hamsters, and hedgehogs, make sure your vaccination site is bandaged and your hands are washed. Do not allow animals to crawl up your sleeve or have access to the skin area around your bandage.
- People who care for livestock should wear long-sleeved clothing and wash their hands before milking animals, or having contact with animals or equipment such as bridles and buckets.

If your animal has any unusual symptoms and you think it could have been exposed to the vaccinia virus accidentally, call your county health department or your veterinarian.

For more information on smallpox and smallpox vaccine, visit our web site at [www.smallpox.mil](http://www.smallpox.mil)