



# Does This Baby Raccoon Need Help?

**Situation: You've found one or more baby raccoon(s) with no mother raccoon in sight.**

## Why This Happens

Unlike some humans, mother raccoons do not have baby sitters or daycare services for their "kids", so busy raccoon mothers must leave their babies unattended for periods of time while they travel around to find food. This often means being gone for hours at a time.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** If you are assisting a young raccoon that you think may be injured or orphaned, it is **IMPERATIVE** that you protect yourself and others from being bitten or scratched by the raccoon! While rabies in raccoons is not currently known to be common in Wisconsin, **rabies is a deadly virus and possible exposures to the virus (mammal bites and scratches) MUST be taken very seriously and handled properly.** If you are bitten or scratched by a wild mammal, **IMMEDIATELY wash the wound thoroughly for several minutes with soap and running water.** Then call a doctor for further advice. For more information see the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).



## FAQs and Humane Solutions:

**"I found a baby raccoon that is injured (or cold, dehydrated, or sick). What should I do?"**

If the baby raccoon is injured, seems very weak, or it has flies, fly eggs (they look like tiny whitish or yellowish rice grains), maggots or ants on it, it will need the care of a licensed wildlife rehabilitator if it is to have any chance for survival. If you are in Milwaukee County, you are welcome to call us at 414-431-6204. To help you find a licensed wildlife rehabilitator in your area, see the [Wisconsin DNR's website](#) at or call the DNR at (608) 267-0866.

**IMPORTANT: Please do not attempt to raise these animals yourself: it is illegal; they may have a disease or parasites that could be transmitted to you, a family member, or your pet; and they deserve the experienced care of a licensed wildlife rehabilitator!**

**"A raccoon nested in my home's fireplace chimney. Tonight, the babies have been crying for over an hour. Could that mean they're orphaned?"**

Raccoons are nocturnal animals, and since you are hearing the babies cry at night, they are probably crying because their mom has left them to go out foraging for food. Crying that goes on for a few hours, especially if it happens during the day when the mother Raccoon should be "home" with her young, **may** be an indication that something is wrong. But **before concluding that the babies are orphaned and removing them from the nest**, please talk with a licensed wildlife rehabilitator that is experienced with raccoons. For more information on wild animals in your chimney or fireplace please click [here](#).



**"I found a baby raccoon. I touched it. That means the mother will reject it, right?"**

**Not true.** If a mother wild animal rejects one of its young it is usually because the youngster is **injured, sick, cold, or has a birth defect.**

**"My children found a baby raccoon. They brought it home and now they want to raise it. What should I do? Do raccoons make good pets?"**

Letting the kids keep or even continue to handle the raccoon is a REALLY BAD IDEA! Why? There are several reasons: It is against the law; because the raccoon will ultimately lack the necessary survival skills acquired from its mother, it will not stand much chance of surviving in the wild if it is raised by someone other than a licensed wildlife rehabilitator who has experience raising raccoons; the raccoon can carry diseases and parasites that can cause serious illness or even death to your family members and pets unless handled properly; as it gets older the raccoon will eventually become unmanageable and will be capable of inflicting serious bite wounds; and wild animals have nutritional needs that are different from domestic animals – if improperly fed the raccoon may suffer from nutritional deficiencies, some of which can be crippling.

So, the first thing to do is put the baby raccoon in a secure, warm, and quiet location (see photos and instructions

below). For their own safety, **don't let the children handle it again**. Have the children wash their hands with soap and water and ask them if anyone was bitten or scratched by the raccoon. If the children say they were bitten or scratched, or if there is evidence of a bite or scratch that may have been caused by the raccoon, see below. If no one was bitten or scratched and the baby raccoon is warm and does not appear to be injured or sick, then it needs to be put back where it came from so its mother can find it.

To give the mother raccoon a good chance of finding her baby again, place the raccoon in a box or other container that the baby cannot get out of but the mother can get into it to retrieve her baby. See "How to Warm a Baby Raccoon," below. Place it as close as safely possible to where it was found. Make sure the baby raccoon is protected from the elements (i.e. rain) and leave it out overnight. Check the box/container in the morning. If the baby raccoon is still there, call a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for help. **Do not try to care for the raccoon yourself**. Check the WI DNR's Directory of Licensed Wisconsin Wildlife Rehabilitators: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/directory.html> or contact the WI DNR's Call Center at **(608) 267-0866** for help finding the nearest licensed wildlife rehabilitator that is able to care for raccoons.



### **"What should I do if I (or my child) is bitten or scratched by a baby raccoon?"**

Secure the baby raccoon in a container from which it can't escape. If it is one of a litter, keep the raccoon that bit someone **separated from its litter mates**. Keep pets and people away from it and do not handle or let anyone else handle the raccoon. **Immediately and thoroughly wash the bitten or scratched area of the body for a minimum of 5 minutes with warm water and soap**. Then call your physician for advice and possible treatment, and the public health department of the municipality or county in which the bite or scratch occurred to report the bite or scratch. The health department will ask you about the circumstances of the bite or scratch and tell you how to proceed. They may decide that the risk of rabies transmission requires that the raccoon be tested for rabies. If you are in the City of Milwaukee you can reach that health department by calling 414-286-3521. If you are in Milwaukee County, you are welcome to call us at 414-431-6204 for further information.

### **How to temporarily house and warm a baby raccoon**

Most young wild animals are dependent on body warmth from one or both of their parents as well as the protection of their nest or den to stay warm. A baby that has fallen from its nest or otherwise become separated from its parent(s) may suffer from hypothermia (sub-normal body temperature). Prior to either attempting to return a baby to the care of its mother, or while you are transporting the animal to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, warming the animal to normal body temperature can mean the difference between life or death. Or, instead of a water-bottle or bag, use a heating pad set on low under half of the box.



Fill a zip-top plastic bag with very warm tap water. The water should not feel so hot that you can't comfortably keep your hand in it indefinitely. Expel as much air as possible from the bag



Cover the water-filled bag with a single layer of ravel-free (no loose strings) cloth.



Place the cloth-covered water bag inside of a cardboard box that has had several pencil-sized air-holes punched through it



Place the baby on the cloth-covered water bag and cover the baby with another ravel-free cloth. Feel the water bag every 20-30 minutes. **Replace the water in the bag with warmer water as needed to keep the baby warm!**

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You may **donate** online at [wihumane.org/donate](http://wihumane.org/donate) or by mailing a check to the following address:  
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