

From **The Anatomy of Melancholy**, by **Robert Burton**, 1628.

[Burton was amazingly accurate in what he wrote about mental illnesses in this classic book.]

*Hydrophobia* is a kind of madness, well known in every village, which comes by the biting of a mad dog, or scratching, saith Aurelianus; touching, or smelling alone sometimes as Skenkius proves, and is incident to many other creatures as well as men: so called because the parties affected cannot endure the sight of water, or any liquor, supposing still they see a mad dog in it. And which is more wonderful; though they be very dry, (as in this malady they are) they will rather die than drink: de Venenis Caelius Aurelianus, an ancient writer, makes a doubt whether this Hydrophobia be a passion of the body or the mind. The part affected is the brain: the cause, poison that comes from the mad dog, which is so hot and dry, that it consumes all the moisture in the body. Hildesheim relates of some that died so mad; and being cut up, had no water, scarce blood, or any moisture left in them. To such as are so affected, the fear of water begins at fourteen days after they are bitten, to some again not till forty or sixty days after: commonly saith Heurnius, they begin to rave, fly water and glasses, to look red, and swell in the face, about twenty days after (if some remedy be not taken in the meantime) to lie awake, to be pensive, sad, to see strange visions, to bark and howl, to fall into a swoon, and oftentimes fits of the falling sickness. Some say, little things like whelps will be seen in their urine. If any of these signs appear, they are past recovery. Many times these symptoms will not appear till six or seven months after, saith Codronchus; and sometimes not till seven or eight years, as Guianerius; twelve as Albertus; six or eight months after, as Galen holds. Baldus the great lawyer died of it: an Augustine friar, and a woman in Delft, that were Forrestus' patients, were miserably consumed with it. The common cure in the country (for such at least as dwell near the seaside) is to duck them over head and ears in sea water; some use charms: every good wife can prescribe medicines. But the best cure to be had in such cases, is from the most approved physicians; they that will read of them, may consult with Dioscorides, lib. 6. c. 37, Heurnius, Hildesheim, Capivaccius, Forrestus, Skenkius and before all others Codronchus an Italian, who hath lately written two exquisite books on the subject.

#### **From the NIH:**

- The actual time between infection and when you get sick (called the "incubation period") ranges from 10 days - 7 years. The average incubation period is 3 - 7 weeks.
- Symptoms include: Swallowing difficulty (drinking causes spasms of the voicebox). [This leads to a fear of drinking, to avoid the painful spasms.]
- There is no known effective treatment for people with symptoms of a rabies infection.