

ZOONOTIC DISEASE PREVENTION FOR IMMUNOCOMPROMISED INDIVIDUALS



Zoonoses (diseases that can be spread between animals and humans) can be a greater risk for individuals with weakened or compromised immune systems. Proper prevention can minimize the risk to these individuals, allowing them - in most cases - to keep their pet.

Cleaning and Hygiene

Frequent hand washing is essential and one of the most effective ways to prevent zoonotic disease transmission.

- **Hands should be washed often**
 - **BEFORE**—preparing food; eating; any contact with infants or young children
 - **AFTER**—having contact with pets or other animals; cleaning up pet waste or cages; using the restroom; blowing your nose; changing infant diapers
- **Avoid contact with pet feces and urine, including litter pans, cages or aquaria**
 - Immunocompromised persons should NOT clean animal waste areas, litter boxes, or fish tanks
 - These areas should be cleaned by someone who is not immunocompromised
- **If avoidance with animal waste is not possible, the following precautions should be taken:**
 - Wear vinyl or rubber gloves when cleaning the pet areas, litter pans, cages or aquaria
 - Avoid generating and inhaling dust – wear a facial mask, if this cannot be avoided
 - After cleaning animal areas, immediately remove gloves and wash your hands with soap and water

Pet Selection

- **Careful consideration should be made before acquiring a new pet**
 - Consult with your physician and veterinarian before adopting a new animal
 - Adopt an adult animal; they are less likely to transmit zoonotic diseases than young animals
- **Certain animals can pose an increased risk of zoonotic disease transmission to immunocompromised persons and should be avoided. These include:**
 - Reptiles (turtles, lizards, or snakes)
 - Amphibians (frogs)
 - Baby chicks and ducklings
 - Animals younger than 6 months of age
 - Exotic pets, such as monkeys, sugar gliders or prairie dogs
 - Wild animals, such as raccoons or skunks
- **Avoid stray or wild animals**
 - The health of stray or wild animals is unknown; disease transmission may occur through bites or scratches

Pet Care

- **Keeping pets healthy can minimize zoonotic diseases**
 - Have your pet checked by a veterinarian twice a year
 - Keep vaccinations current, especially rabies
 - Use veterinarian recommended tick and flea prevention
 - Pets with diarrhea should be examined by a veterinarian
- **Do not allow pets to interact with wildlife**
- **Do not allow your animal to eat other animal's feces**
- **Do not feed raw or under cooked meats to your pet—feed pets a high-quality commercial pet food**

Animal Contact

- **Keep pet's nails clipped to minimize scratching**
 - If you are scratched or bitten, immediately wash the wound with soap and water; consult your physician to determine whether additional treatment is needed
- **Do not play roughly with pets to avoid bites and scratches**
- **Do not handle animals that have diarrhea**
 - Have a friend/relative (who is not immunocompromised) take your pet to a veterinarian to determine the cause
- **Do not let pets lick your face or mouth, any open cuts or wounds**

In general, the risk of getting a disease from your pet is low. The benefit of animal companionship usually outweighs the potential risks.

For More Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

Healthy Pets Healthy People.
www.cdc.gov/healthypets/index.htm

For People at Extra Risk.
www.cdc.gov/healthypets/extra_risk.htm

Preventing infections from pets: A guide for people with HIV infection.
www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/brochure/oj_pets.htm

Pet-Scripton.
www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pdf/petscript_general.pdf

Pets Are Wonderful Support (PAWS) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)

Safe Pet Guidelines
www.pawssf.org/graphics/education/safe_pet_guidelines.pdf