Hand Washing

Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of disease.

- Wash hands often when around pets, especially:
  - AFTER – direct contact with pets, their poop, toys, bedding or other objects in their environment
  - BEFORE – preparing or eating food, or having contact with infants or young children
- Use warm water and soap. Lather and scrub at least 20 seconds (sing the Happy Birthday song twice).
- Supervise children to ensure proper hand washing.
- Alcohol hand gels can be used if hands are not visibly dirty.

Avoid Entry Into Your Body

Germs that enter your body can cause disease. Protect your eyes, nose, and mouth when you are around pets or animal areas.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth when you are around pets, until hands can be washed.
- Do not let pets lick your face or mouth.
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning animal cages. Wash your hands after you are finished.
- If dust is generated, such as when cleaning bird cages, wear a mask to prevent entry into your nose.

Wound Care

Germs can enter your body through breaks in the skin.

- Keep any cuts, scrapes, wounds, even chapped or dry skin covered when you are around pets.
- Avoid bites and scratches from your pet. Keep pet’s nails clipped to minimize scratching and avoid rough play.
- Promptly clean any scratches or bites received from pets.
- Monitor the wound for any signs of infection (e.g., redness, swelling, oozing). If seen, contact your healthcare provider.
- Do not let pets lick any open wounds you may have.

Children and Pets

Children, especially those 5 years old and younger, should always be supervised around pets.

- Do not let children
  - Put their hands or objects (e.g., pacifiers) into their mouths when they are around animals or animal areas.
  - Kiss pets or allow pets to lick their face.
  - Play roughly with pets, to avoid bites and scratches.

Keep Animals Healthy

Keep your pet healthy to reduce zoonotic diseases. Talk to your veterinarian about the best health program.

- Have your pet checked annually by your veterinarian, and keep vaccinations, especially rabies, current.
- Have pets with diarrhea examined by a veterinarian.
- Do not feed raw or undercooked meats to your pet.

Keep Animal Areas Clean

Zoonotic disease organisms can be shed in animal feces.

- Wear gloves when cleaning up animal waste, cleaning cages or litter boxes.
- Change cat litter boxes and bird cage linings daily.
- Remove pet waste in the yard or kennel weekly.
- Keep litter boxes away from kitchen and eating areas.
- Do not allow animals to eat other animal’s feces.
- Wash pet bedding and toys frequently.

Avoid Disease Vectors

Insects, ticks and wildlife can carry disease organisms that can harm you or your pet.

- Use veterinarian recommended tick and flea preventatives.
- Avoid wooded areas or being outdoors during peak vector activity times (e.g., dusk and dawn) or wear EPA-approved insect repellants.
- Do not allow pets to interact with wildlife.