

Salmonella in Reptiles and Amphibians

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Often kept as pets, certain reptiles and amphibians can be a source of a human infection known as Salmonellosis, because they may be carriers of *Salmonella* bacteria. Some typical pets in these groups include turtles, frogs, iguanas, snakes, geckos, horned toads, salamanders, and chameleons. Human infection can also occur after coming in contact with the reptile's living environment, such as a terrarium or cage. The animals can appear healthy and clean but still carry the infective bacteria.

Symptoms

Common symptoms of Salmonellosis include diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and/or abdominal cramps. In most cases, treatment with antibiotics actually extends the length of time the infection is present, so antibiotics are not routinely used for treatment. Rarely, the illness can become serious and result in hospitalization especially in very young, very old and immunocompromised individuals. If a severe case of Salmonellosis develops, infection may spread from the infected individual's intestines into the bloodstream and then to other body sites and can cause death unless the person is treated promptly with antibiotics.



Prevention

The best thing to do to prevent *Salmonella* infection after handling an animal, or their environment, is to immediately wash your hands.

- Wash with soap and water. If unavailable, use hand sanitizer.
- Adults should supervise children's hand washing.
- Children under 5 years of age should not handle or be in close quarters with reptile or amphibian pets.
- Reptiles and amphibians are not suitable for a pre-k or kindergarten classroom.
- Do not touch your mouth after handling reptiles or amphibians and do not eat or drink around these animals.
- Do not let reptiles or amphibians freely roam the house.
- Reptile and amphibian habitats and their contents should be carefully cleaned outside of the home. Use disposable gloves when cleaning and do not dispose of water in sinks used for food preparation or for obtaining drinking water.
- Do not bathe reptiles or amphibians, or their habitats, in your kitchen sink. If bathtubs are used for these purposes, they should be thoroughly cleaned afterward. Use bleach to disinfect a tub or other place where reptile or amphibian habitats are cleaned.
- Wash any clothing the reptile or amphibian might have touched.
- Use soap or a disinfectant to thoroughly clean any surfaces that have been in contact with reptiles or amphibians.