

Learn how to safeguard against Salmonella.



Salmonella Germs in Reptiles and Amphibians



Text written by the Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is intended for informational purposes only; please seek advice from your physician and your reptile's veterinarian if questions or problems occur.

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Published by



Follow these safe handling steps and enjoy your pets!

Reptiles and amphibians often carry *Salmonella* germs in their intestinal tracts and shed these germs in their feces, which can contaminate the reptile or amphibian's skin, water and objects in their environment. *Salmonella* germs usually do not cause illness in reptiles, but can easily spread from reptiles and amphibians to humans and cause serious illness in people.

People may become infected when they eat, drink, or put their hands in or near their mouth after handling the reptile, amphibian, or items in its environment.

Most *Salmonella* infections in people cause mild illness with diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps. However, the infection can spread to the bloodstream, bone marrow, or nervous system, leading to severe and sometimes fatal illness. Such severe infections are more likely to occur in children under 5 years old, pregnant women, or people with weak immune systems, which include adults over 65 years of age, people with an illness such as diabetes or HIV/AIDS, organ transplant recipients or those undergoing chemotherapy.

Unfortunately, *Salmonella* germs cannot be removed from the intestinal tract of reptiles and amphibians. Using antibiotics to get rid of this bacteria does not work and may cause *Salmonella* germs to become resistant to antibiotics.

It is currently not possible to raise or identify reptiles and amphibians that do not carry *Salmonella* germs; these animals may get and shed *Salmonella* at any time. Testing feces from healthy reptiles and amphibians to see if the animal is carrying *Salmonella* is not recommended as it may not be accurate.

Although healthy reptiles and amphibians can carry *Salmonella* and other germs that can make people sick, there's good news! You can help keep yourself healthy around your pet reptiles and amphibians:

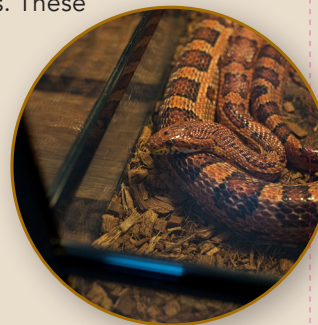
- **Always wash your hands** thoroughly after handling reptiles and amphibians, and anything in the area where they live or roam such as their habitats, food or equipment.



- **Reptiles and amphibians are not recommended for children under the age of five.**

This includes in households or school settings. Children younger than 5 years of age should not handle/touch amphibians, reptiles or their environment because they are at a higher risk for serious illness and hospitalization from *Salmonella* germs.

- **Keep your reptiles, amphibians and their equipment out of your kitchen** or anywhere in your home where food is prepared, served, or consumed. Never use food-preparation areas to clean reptile and amphibian habitats or anything in their habitats. These items should be cleaned outside of your home. If you clean the habitat in the bathroom, thoroughly clean and disinfect the area right afterwards.



- **Avoid letting your reptile roam free** in your house or soaking them in the bathtub or sink. This can be harmful to your pet and can contaminate your environment with *Salmonella*.

- **Don't cross-contaminate!**

You don't have to touch a reptile or amphibian to get sick from their germs. Be aware that any reptile food such as frozen or live rodents, equipment and materials, including the tank water, can be contaminated with *Salmonella* and other germs.



- **Do not kiss or snuggle** with reptiles and amphibians because this will increase your risk of getting sick.

For more information:
[CDC.gov/HealthyPets](https://www.cdc.gov/HealthyPets)