

## What Should You Do to Prevent Salmonellosis?

-  Pet store owners, veterinarians, and pediatricians should provide information to owners and potential purchasers of reptiles about the risk of getting sick from salmonellosis.



-  You should always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling reptiles or reptile cages/tanks. Disinfect the cage/tank weekly with bleach.
-  Children often forget to wash their hands. Make sure your children wash their hands after petting animals or touching the cage.
-  Do not kiss reptiles.
-  People at high risk of getting sick from salmonellosis should avoid contact with reptiles.
-  Pet reptiles should not be kept in preschool or child care centers.

-  Families expecting a baby should remove pet reptiles from the home and thoroughly clean the home before the baby arrives.
-  Pet reptiles should not be allowed to roam freely throughout the home or living area. Pet reptiles should be kept in their cages/tanks.
-  Pet reptiles should be kept out of kitchens and other food-preparation areas to prevent contamination. Kitchen sinks should not be used to bathe reptiles or to wash their dishes, cages, or aquariums. If bathtubs are used for these purposes, they should be cleaned thoroughly and disinfected with bleach.

## Resources

**Acute Communicable Disease Control Unit (ACDC)**  
213-240-7941

**Veterinary Public Health**  
877-747-2243

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**  
**Reptiles and Salmonella**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/ReptilesSalmonella/>

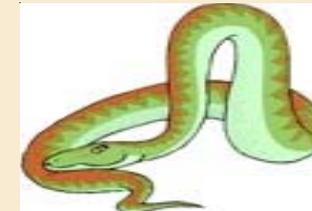
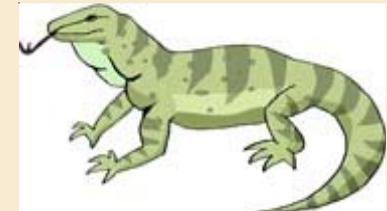
**ACDC: Salmonellosis and Pet Reptiles**  
<http://www.lapublichealth.org/acd/Diseases/Reptiles.htm>

**Veterinary Public Health**  
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/>



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
**Public Health**

## Pet Reptiles



Handle With Care!  
Protect Your Family's Health

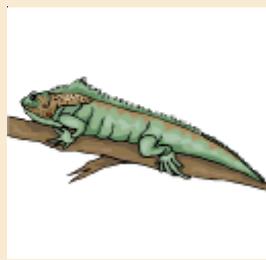
## Reptiles Carry Salmonella

Many people are choosing reptiles as pets.

Lizards, turtles and snakes are all reptiles.

People like reptiles because people think they need less attention than dogs and cats. However, they may not be appropriate pets for all families.

Lizards, turtles, and especially iguanas, are very popular pets. You may know someone who has an iguana.



If you have a pet reptile or are considering one...

### READ THIS!

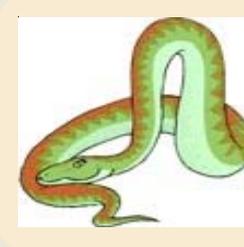
Many reptiles carry germs or bacteria called *Salmonella*. Nine out of 10 reptiles may have the bacteria.

You cannot tell by looking at a reptile if it has *Salmonella*. Most reptiles look healthy even if they have *Salmonella*. That's because *Salmonella* may be part of a reptile's normal bacteria.

*Salmonella* bacteria are passed in reptile droppings. As a result, the bacteria can spread around the reptile's cage, its food or water dish or anywhere on the reptile's body.

If the reptile is taken out of its cage, the bacteria can get on furniture, counters, floors, carpets, and your hands or clothes when you handle or feed your reptile. The bacteria are too small to see without a microscope.

If you put your hand to your mouth or the bacteria gets into your food or water, you might get sick.



The disease that people get is called salmonellosis which can make some people very sick.

## People at High Risk

- Babies
- Children under five years of age
- Pregnant women
- Senior citizens
- People taking high-dose steroids
- People with cancer, AIDS, diabetes, etc.

Many children get salmonellosis after contact with reptiles. Salmonellosis in children causes fever and severe diarrhea, sometimes with blood in the stool. People at high risk may also get blood or brain infections.

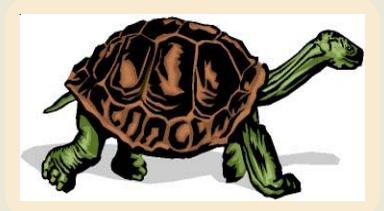
Most adults have moderate fever and diarrhea but may have no symptoms at all.

Fortunately, salmonellosis rarely causes death.

## Did you know...

That reptiles are not the only pets that can carry *Salmonella* bacteria? Dogs, cats, hamsters, rabbits, birds and other pets can spread the disease too. However, *Salmonella* is much more common in reptiles than in other types of pets.

Each year, thousands of reptiles are sold as pets in Southern California. Some reptiles, such as turtles with a shell length of less than four inches, are illegal to sell. This is because they are commonly given to small children who are more likely to handle them and not wash their hands.



Reptiles can be found in many places that your child may visit.

Schools, teachers, babysitters, relatives, friends and neighbors may have a reptile.

Many pet stores have iguanas, turtles or other reptiles for sale.

...Ask your children...

You may be surprised to learn all the places your children have come in contact with reptiles!

