

Enjoying Animal Exhibits... without getting sick

Diseases called “zoonoses” can be passed from animals to humans. Animals can carry organisms that are harmful to humans without appearing sick. Some zoonoses are very dangerous to humans. Outbreaks of *E.coli* 0157:H7 and *Salmonella* have been associated with animal exhibits.

People can get diseases from animals through direct contact with:

- the animal
- their bites and scratches,
- their feces, urine, saliva, or blood,
- the environment where they are contained.

If you get harmful organisms on your hands you can spread them to your face, mouth or food and become ill.

Who is at greatest risk of illness?

- children less than 5 years of age,
- the elderly,
- pregnant women,
- immuno-compromised persons.

How do I protect my family and myself?

While visiting the animals:

- **Do not** eat, drink or smoke,
- **Do not** touch your face or mouth with your hands,
- **Do not** bring children’s toys, or pacifiers into the animal exhibit,
- **Supervise** young children closely.

After visiting the animals: Clean your hands

- **Wash your hands** with soap and water or
- **Sanitize your hands** with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

If you touched an animal, their enclosures, their food, or cleaned up after them, clean your hands before touching anything else.

Always clean your hands before eating, drinking and smoking.

What if I become ill?

If you or your children become sick with stomach cramps, vomiting or diarrhea within a week of visiting a petting zoo or animal exhibit, visit your doctor.

Tell the doctor that you have been in contact with exhibit animals.

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