

Enjoying Animal Exhibits... without getting sick

Many diseases such as E. coli can be passed from animals to you and your child during contact with animals and their environment at animal exhibits. Animals, even those that do not appear sick have the potential to make you sick.



How can animals make you sick?

- through direct animal contact
- animal bites and scratches
- contact with animal feces, urine, saliva or blood
- hand contact with animal contaminated environments such as bedding

Infants under one year of age and immuno-compromised persons are at greatest risk of illness. It is recommended that they do not touch or feed any animal.

Children less than five years of age, the elderly, pregnant women, immuno-compromised persons, and cognitively impaired persons are at greatest risk of illness. Encourage them to wash their hands frequently and thoroughly.

This document is available in accessible formats upon request.

**Region of Waterloo Public Health
and Emergency Services**

Health Protection and Investigation

How can you protect your family and yourself while visiting animal exhibits?

- Wash your hands with soap and water if you have touched an animal, their cages or enclosure, their bedding or their food before touching anything else.
- Substitute alcohol hand gel sanitizers for handwashing only when handwash facilities are unavailable.
- Never use baby wipes in place of handwashing because they do not contain enough disinfectant to kill bacteria.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke at the animal exhibit.
- 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 especially those under five years of age.
- Cover children's open wounds with a clean bandage.
- Discourage children from sucking fingers or touching their own mouth with fingers or wiping their hands on their clothing when in the animal areas.

What can you do if you become ill?

- If you or your children become ill with stomach cramps, vomiting or diarrhea within a month of visiting a petting zoo or animal exhibit, visit your doctor. Tell the doctor that you have been in contact with farm animals.
- If you have been bitten or scratched by display animals or have any questions please contact Health Protection and Investigation, Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services at 519-575-4400.

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