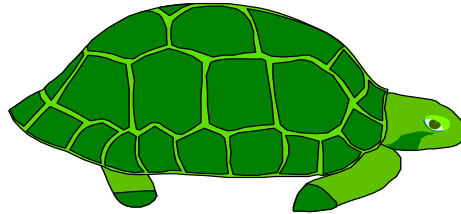




calgary health region

Exotic Pets in the Family Day Home



Exotic pets such as hedgehogs, birds, turtles, snakes and lizards can carry harmful organisms that can cause illness in humans. The greatest concern is Salmonella bacteria. If you have an exotic pet in your home it is important to follow precautionary steps to prevent the spread of illness to you and the children in your home.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that reptiles should be kept out of homes that include children under the age of 5 years.

What is Salmonella?

Salmonella are bacteria that can cause illness with symptoms of diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps. This illness is often mistakenly called the 'stomach flu'. Young children are among the most at risk to this disease. Reptiles, hedgehogs and birds may carry the bacteria and still appear healthy. People may get the disease if they do not properly wash their hands with soap and water after handling the reptile or anything that has come into contact with the reptile. Salmonella may also be passed from person to person.

Recommendations to Prevent the Spread of Salmonella from Exotic Pets in the Home:

- ✓ Always **wash your hands** after handling exotic pets, pet food and cages.
- ✓ Do not allow your exotic pet to run freely throughout the home.
- ✓ Keep exotic pets out of kitchens or other food preparation areas. Do not clean the pet or their cage in the kitchen sink.
- ✓ If bathtubs are used to clean the pet and their cage, thoroughly clean the bathtub and then disinfect with a bleach solution (1 part bleach to nine parts water).
- ✓ Do not allow children to have contact with the exotic pet, its food or cage. Keep exotic pets out of rooms where children play, sleep or eat.

For more information contact Environmental Health at 943-8060.

