



# Salmonella & Reptiles

## How to Protect Yourself & Family

### Salmonella: How to Protect Yourself and Family as a Reptile Owner

Most people are familiar with Salmonella, a type of bacteria that can cause disease in humans and animals. Salmonellosis is the illness caused by infection with Salmonella, and it typically presents in humans with diarrhoea, fever, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. In vulnerable individuals, such as infants, the elderly, or immunocompromised people, the infection can be severe and, in rare cases, even fatal.

### Do Reptiles Carry Salmonella? Understanding the Risk for Pet Owners

Most human cases of salmonellosis result from eating undercooked meat, poultry, or seafood, consuming unpasteurised dairy products, or eating contaminated fruit and vegetables. However, live animals can also be a source of infection, especially reptiles, amphibians, poultry, and livestock.

### How Reptile Owners Can Prevent Salmonella Infection

Reptiles naturally carry Salmonella as part of their normal gut flora. They usually do not show signs of illness from the bacteria. Humans, however, do not carry Salmonella in their gut flora, and accidental ingestion can lead to serious disease. Because Salmonella is commonly found in the intestinal tract of reptiles, it is safe to assume that all reptiles may be shedding Salmonella in their faeces. The bacteria can also contaminate their skin, environment, and anything they touch

### How Reptile Owners Can Prevent Salmonella Infection

If you keep reptiles as pets, take the following precautions to protect yourself, your family, and your guests:

- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling reptiles, their enclosure, food, water bowls, or waste.
- Avoid touching your face, mouth, or eyes while handling reptiles.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling reptiles.
- Never kiss your reptile.





# Salmonella & Reptiles

## How to Protect Yourself & Family

- Keep reptiles away from food preparation and eating areas, including kitchen counters, dining tables, and pantries.
- Do not use sinks, bathtubs, or kitchen areas to clean reptile enclosures or bathe reptiles. Use a dedicated container and dispose of wastewater in the toilet or garden.
- Immunocompromised individuals should avoid direct contact with reptiles. If contact is necessary, strict hand hygiene is essential.
- Infants and young children should not handle reptiles, as their immune systems are immature and their hands are difficult to disinfect properly.
- Do not allow reptiles to roam on couches, beds, or human clothing.
- Always supervise children when they are interacting with reptiles.
- Educate children and visitors on safe handling and hygiene around reptiles.

### Can You Test or Treat Reptiles for Salmonella?

Attempting to eliminate Salmonella from a reptile's gut using antibiotics is ineffective and dangerous. It can lead to the development of antibiotic-resistant strains of Salmonella, posing a greater risk to human health. Testing reptiles for Salmonella is also unreliable, as the bacteria may be shed intermittently, resulting in false-negative results. It is safest to assume all reptiles are carriers



### Final Note

Although reptile-associated Salmonella infections in humans are uncommon, they can be very serious. By following basic hygiene practices and safe handling guidelines, reptile owners can minimise the risk and continue enjoying their pets safely.