

# EMERGING ZOOONOTIC DISEASES AND YOUR FAMILY

Biological Emergencies



While there are many microorganisms present in our environment, some can be of special concern based on their ability to spread rapidly or cause severe disease; some can be new or “emerging” threats. Fortunately most can be avoided by understanding the risks and taking basic preventive measures.

## Emerging & Zoonotic Diseases

- **Emerging diseases**
  - Diseases that are newly discovered, have increased in occurrence or have spread to new locations or species.
  - Examples include: West Nile virus, Lyme disease.
- **Zoonotic diseases**
  - Diseases of animals that can be transferred to people. Many of the recent emerging diseases of humans are also considered zoonotic diseases.
  - Examples include: rabies, ringworm, salmonellosis.

## Hand washing and Hygiene

Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of disease.

- **Wash your hands often.**
  - Use soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Antimicrobial hand gels can be effective when hands are not visibly dirty.
  - Teach children about proper hand washing.
  - Wash hands before preparing food or eating.
  - Wash hands after contacting pets or other animals, cleaning pet waste or cages, using the restroom, and coughing or blowing your nose.

## Personal Protection While Outdoors

Insects and wildlife can serve as sources for some emerging and zoonotic diseases.

- **Take precautions when going outdoors.**
  - Avoid contact with wild animals or waterfowl.
  - Avoid insect bites while outdoors.
    - Avoid being outside during the peak activity times (e.g., dusk and dawn for mosquitoes).
    - Wear insect repellent containing DEET.
- **Remove insect breeding areas around your home.**
  - Stagnant water sources are mosquito breeding grounds.
  - Tall vegetation can harbor ticks.
  - Animal feces attracts flies and other insects.
- **Rodent-proof your home.**
  - Keep pet food in containers with tight lids.

## Food Safety

- **Handle and prepare foods safely.**
  - Don't eat raw or undercooked meat or eggs.
  - Cook foods thoroughly until the internal temperature is 160°F.
  - Wash fruits and vegetables before eating.
  - Avoid raw milk or unpasteurized dairy products.
  - Store foods at the proper temperature.
  - Avoid cross contamination by using separate cutting boards and knives for meat items, and fruits and vegetables.

## Children and Animals

Children, especially those under 5 years of age and persons with weakened immune systems can be at greater risk for diseases, including zoonotic diseases.

- Children under five years old should never be left unsupervised with animals.
- Teach children to avoid rough play with pets, to avoid being bitten.
- Monitor children's contact with animals. Don't let children put their hands or other objects into their mouths after playing with pets.
- Don't allow children to kiss pets or allow pets to lick the children's face.
- Be sure children wash their hands after contact with animals and pet food or treats.

## Pet Health

Maintaining good health in your pets, not only keeps them healthy, but reduces the risk for zoonotic diseases to you and your family.

- Have your pet checked at least twice a year by a veterinarian.
- Keep your pets' vaccinations current.
- Check your pet regularly for parasites.
- Use recommended flea and tick prevention products.
- Do not allow pets to interact with wildlife.
- Do not allow your pet to eat other animals' feces.
- Do not feed raw or undercooked meat to your pets.

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