Animal House Rules

Easy ways to prevent pet-related infections

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Most households in the United States own at least one pet. What's more, a growing body of research supports the belief that owning a pet offers a bunch of health benefits. But the downside to cozying up to Fido or Fluffy is that pets can also spread infection and cause us to become ill.

Pets of all kinds (think turtles, snakes, lizards, ferrets and birds, among others, in addition to cute cats and dogs) can pass on illnesses to their human owners when people come into contact with bacteria that live in their animals' skin or coat, or that pets excrete in their waste.

Unvaccinated domestic animals can transmit rabies if they are bitten by rabid animals. In addition, pets can also cause illnesses such as cat-scratch disease, parrot fever and toxoplasmosis.

But the good news is transmissions are preventable if you follow these simple steps: Wash your hands after touching your pet; bag and dispose of your pet's waste quickly; avoid scratches and bites, and if you are scratched or bitten, get immediate medical care; and get your pets vaccinated and routinely checked at the vet to prevent them from acquiring infectious diseases in the first place.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/pet-related-infections-27701-9821