

PREVENTION OF  
SALMONELLA  
INFECTION FROM  
REPTILES

- Do not buy small turtles for pets or as gifts
- Keep turtles out of homes with children under 5 years old, the elderly, or people with weakened immune systems
- If your family is expecting a baby, remove any pet turtle (or any other reptile or amphibian) from the home before the infant arrives
- Do not clean turtle tanks or other supplies in the kitchen sink. Use bleach to disinfect a tub or other place where turtle habitats are cleaned
- Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after touching a turtle, its cage, or anything that comes into contact with a turtle or its housing
- Do not allow turtles to roam freely through the house especially in food preparation areas
- Seek medical attention if you have diarrhea, fever, or vomiting

FOR MORE  
INFORMATION:

[http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/  
ConsumerUpdates/ucm048151.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm048151.htm)

[http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/  
spotlight\\_an\\_turtles.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/spotlight_an_turtles.htm)



Pet Turtles:  
Are you at Risk  
for a Salmonella  
Infection?



Philadelphia  
Department of Public  
Health

Division of Disease  
Control

215-685-6740

[http://www.phila.gov/  
health/DiseaseControl/](http://www.phila.gov/health/DiseaseControl/)



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# What is Salmonellosis?

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Salmonellosis is an infection of the intestines caused by a bacteria (germ) called "*Salmonella*" which is found in some foods and the environment. *Salmonella* can cause fever, cramping, vomiting, and diarrhea. Most symptoms begin within 12-36 hours after being exposed to the bacteria.

Salmonellosis is a very common infectious disease in Philadelphia. Anyone can get salmonellosis but the risk is highest in infants and children under 5 years of age. Salmonellosis can be a serious illness for children, resulting in hospitalization and, on extremely rare occasions, death. People who have weakened immune systems are also at higher risk. People with salmonellosis usually get better without treatment. However, if you have signs and symptoms of salmonellosis see your doctor.

# Turtles

Reptiles such as turtles, snakes, and lizards carry *Salmonella* in their gut. Since 1975, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has banned the sale of turtles with a shell smaller than 4 inches because they are a major source of *Salmonella* infections in young children. Children can get *Salmonella* by holding, touching, and kissing these small turtles.

Illegal turtle sales continue in the Philadelphia area despite the FDA ban. They are frequently sold on street corners. Despite what the vendor may say, they are being sold illegally and the turtles can cause illness.

Red Ear Slider turtles are most commonly being sold. They can live up to 40 years and grow up to 12 inches. They are semi-aquatic reptiles and they need proper housing, lighting and food. A small turtle needs at least a 10 gallon aquarium and an adult turtle requires a 75 gallon aquarium.

# WHAT TO DO ABOUT TURTLES

If you would like to remove a turtle from your house, call the Animal Care and Control Team at 267-385-3800 to surrender your turtle.

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health does NOT recommend releasing turtles into the wild. It is illegal to release them because they are not native to the Philadelphia area and can introduce diseases that would harm the native wildlife population.

If you would like to report an illegal turtle vendor call (215) 685-9000.

