

PetSmart, Inc. Psittacosis Fact Sheet

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What is psittacosis and how is it spread?

- Psittacosis (also known as chlamydophila) is an infection caused by bacteria that can be carried by birds. In rare cases, it can cause a respiratory infection in humans similar to a cold or flu and is treatable with antibiotics.
- Exposure in humans typically comes from inhaling dust from dirty bird habitats containing dried feces, or from hand-to-mouth exposure after contact with birds or bird feces. The risk of contracting psittacosis from handling a bird is unlikely, particularly when good hygiene practices are followed.
- Psittacosis can infect many bird species, but is usually found in birds of the parrot family. It can cause a bird to appear drowsy, eat poorly, and have runny eyes or nose and diarrhea.

How can I protect myself? How can I prevent infection?

Good hygiene practices are generally all that are required to prevent the risk of contracting bacterial infections, such as psittacosis. More specifically:

- Always wash your hands with soap and warm running water after touching pets or any objects and surfaces that a pet has also touched, especially after cleaning a pet's habitat.
- Children should always be supervised when handling pets, especially since they tend to put their fingers in their mouths.
- If you are pregnant or have a compromised immune system, avoid contact with reptiles, baby chicks, and ducklings.
- As always, PetSmart recommends that small pets only be purchased from reputable retailers or breeders. We discourage buying small pets at swap meets, auctions or other unregulated public venues.

What measures does PetSmart take to prevent the spread of psittacosis?

- As part of our preventive health program, we work closely with our vendors and veterinarians to ensure the health and safety of our associates, customers and the pets in our care. The precautions we have in place with our vendors help reduce the risk of disease.
- We conduct rigorous and regular inspections of all suppliers' facilities to ensure safe, sanitary pet housing, proper pet care and pet handling procedures.
- We require all associates to wash their hands before and after handling all the pets we sell in our stores. Also, we require pet care associates to wear gowns, goggles, gloves and masks during regular cleaning of the habitats.
- PetSmart communicates with our associates frequently to ensure they're aware of the latest developments and precautionary measures. Our associates are trained and educated to provide the highest standards of care for all the pets in our stores.
- Customers are required to review the pet sales record that contains information regarding the responsibilities of pet ownership, preventive measures, symptoms and treatments of diseases, including psittacosis or chlamydophila, which can be associated with pets before taking a pet home.
- We encourage anyone with questions or concerns to let us know.

If you have further questions regarding psittacosis, the pets in your care or your own pet bird, please contact your vet or physician. You or your physician may also contact your local State Department of Health for further information relating to human health.