

Pet Safety after Solid Organ Transplantation

Pets are a great source of comfort and support to children with organ failure and after a transplant. People with organ failure have often had many negative health experiences leading up to the transplant, and the bond with a pet can be important to reduce stress and

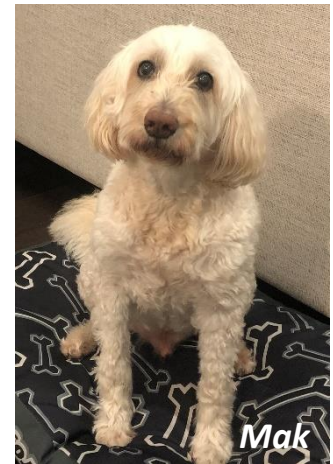


anxiety. Pets that need physical activity, such as dogs, can also motivate people to become more active themselves, which is good for both the pet and the human! The following information will help you to maintain a safe and supportive relationship with your pet.

People who have received organ transplants are more likely to get infections in general. There are some types of diseases that people can get from animals, even when the animal is not sick. It is important to take some simple steps to reduce the risk of getting sick after contact with animals.

Keep clean!

It's important to clean up after your pet, but it is better not to handle feces (animal waste) directly if you can avoid it. If you don't have a choice, it is best to wear gloves to avoid direct soiling of your hands. In addition to wearing gloves, wash your hands thoroughly with running water and soap after handling animal waste. Adults should supervise the hand washing of children.



Caring for your sick pet

If your pet is ill, take them to the veterinary clinic as soon as possible.

If your pet is sick, you should avoid touching your pet. If you have to touch your pet, wash



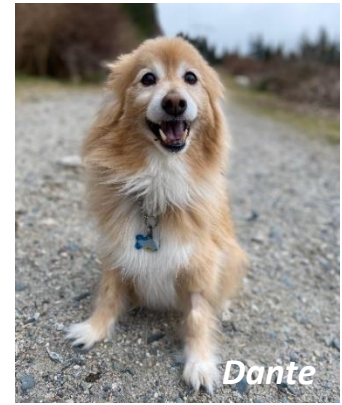
your hands immediately afterward. Any cat or dog that has diarrhea should be checked by a veterinarian for infection with *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, *Salmonella*, and *Campylobacter*.

Pets should also be fully immunized to prevent infections. There is no risk of transmission to humans following immunization of pets with non-live vaccines. If your pet needs a live vaccine, such as an intranasal live attenuated vaccine for *Bordetella bronchiseptica* (kennel cough), you should not hold the pet during vaccination to avoid direct contact with the vaccine. You should also pay extra attention to avoid direct contact with your pet's nose, mouth or face

right after vaccination.

Caring for dogs

If you have a dog, have another person pick up dog feces (waste) if possible. If you must handle dog feces yourself, wear disposable gloves and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after you remove the gloves. Seek medical attention if you get bitten by any dog, including your own dog.



Caring for birds

Bird droppings can contain germs that get into the air and cause serious lung infections. Pet birds should be kept outside of the home or in a room that you will not enter. They should not be kept in your bedroom. If birds must be kept inside the house, someone else must clean the cage lining every day. Routine screening of healthy birds for zoonotic diseases is not recommended.



Caring for fish

Like all animals, fish may carry germs that make people sick. These germs can also contaminate the water in which fish live. Avoid cleaning fish tanks by yourself; ask a family member or friend for assistance. If this task cannot be avoided, you should wear disposable gloves during such activities. Do not clean a fish tank if you have a wound or an abrasion on your hands or arms. Wash your hands thoroughly with running water and soap afterwards.



Caring for cats

If you have a cat, have another person clean out the kitty litter on a regular (daily) basis. Do not place litter boxes in kitchens, dining rooms, or other areas where food is prepared and eaten. Keep your cat indoors. Avoid keeping kittens at home if possible and especially avoid getting scratched by kittens. Seek medical attention if you get bitten by a cat.



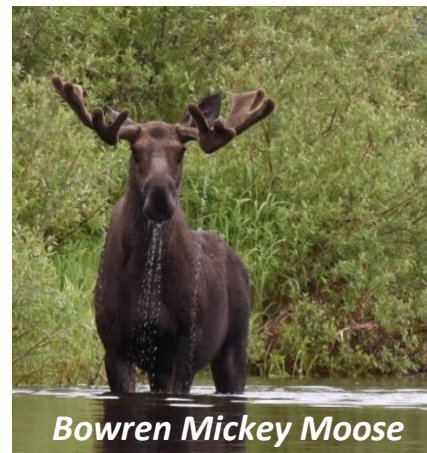


Feeding your pet

Just like people, pets can get diseases from eating contaminated food. By protecting your pet from foodborne diseases, you can protect your own health as well. Pets should be fed only high-quality commercial pet foods. If eggs, poultry or meat products are given to your pet as supplements, they should be well-cooked. Any dairy products given to your pets should be pasteurized. Additionally, pets should be prevented from drinking toilet bowl water and from having access to garbage. Do not let your pet scavenge for food, hunt or eat other animals' feces.

Animals to avoid

You should not handle wild animals or play with stray cats or dogs. Don't play with other people's pets if you don't know the owner or the health status of that animal. Do not adopt wild animals as pets or bring them into your home. Ensure that areas near the home are free of raccoon latrines. Do not handle rodents (hamsters, mice, rats), reptiles (lizards, snakes, turtles) or baby chicks and ducklings. If you come into contact, wash your hands thoroughly with running water and soap.



Visiting farms and petting zoos

You should be cautious when visiting farms and when in contact with farm animals, including animals at petting zoos and fairs. If you are touching farm animals, you and your family members should always wear gloves, and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water as soon as you remove the gloves.



Getting a new pet

You should check with your transplant coordinator if you plan to get a new pet or plan on spending a lot of time around animals (working on a farm, horse-riding, volunteering at an animal shelter). In some rare situations, such as with unusual pets, you may also want to consult with the infectious disease specialist. Consider waiting until you are on stable-immunosuppression before getting a new pet.

Some animals are considered high-risk for causing illness in people with an organ transplant and should not be kept as pets.

Pets to avoid include:

- Rodents, including hamsters, mice, and pet rats.
- Reptiles, including lizards, snakes, and turtles.
- Baby chicks and ducklings.
- Exotic pets, including monkeys.



You should avoid contact with these animals and their environments (including their food or cage). If you come into contact, wash your hands thoroughly with running water and soap.

Other sources of information

More information on living safely with pets and other animals can be found at the following websites:

- <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/animals-your-health>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/index.html>
- <https://en.projetlaurent.org> Canadian research project about living safely with pets after transplant

Featuring: Non-human friends of the BC Children’s Hospital transplant team!

References:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/specific-groups/organ-transplant-patients.html>
2. Avery, RK, Michaels, MG; on behalf of the AST Infectious Diseases Community of Practice. Strategies for safe living following solid organ transplantation—Guidelines from the American Society of Transplantation Infectious Diseases Community of Practice. Clin Transplant. 2019.