

aquatic life safety

It is important to keep in mind that aquatic life and the water they live in can carry bacteria that can cause illness in people. In addition to bacteria, some aquatic life have defense mechanisms that can cause injury to people. Some aquatic life are venomous and exposure to such can cause an allergic reaction in people. Women who are pregnant, senior citizens, children under the age of 5 and people with weakened immune systems should consult their physician before handling aquatic life.

Important information:

The most common bacterial diseases that can be present in aquatic life and their aquarium are Mycobacterium and Nocardiosis, in addition to *Salmonella*.

How to avoid injury, toxin and bacterial exposure:

- Avoid contact with all spines, barbs or fangs anytime you must place your hand and/or arm into an aquarium, ensuring that you are aware of the location of all aquatic life within the aquarium
- Always use a specimen container or cup to capture fish instead of a net, which can injure the fish and may increase the chance of contact with a spine, barb or fang
- Never place your hand or arm into an aquarium if you have open skin wounds; new and healing wounds carry the same risk so it is best to wait until your wound has completely healed
- Never drink water from an aquarium or the water in which aquatic life are transported

- ❑ Do not touch your face after handling aquatic life or the contents of an aquarium until you have thoroughly washed your hands with antibacterial soap and water or used hand sanitizer
- ❑ Do not touch food, beverages or their containers until you have thoroughly washed your hands with antibacterial soap and water or used hand sanitizer
- ❑ Always wash your hands thoroughly with antibacterial soap and water or use hand sanitizer before and after handling aquatic life and/or their habitat contents

What to do if exposed to toxin or bacteria:

- ❑ Immediately wash the exposed area with hot water and antibacterial soap, trying to use the hottest water temperature without burning your skin, as hot water works best to help neutralize the toxin
- ❑ Seek medical attention if you believe you are having an allergic reaction or if you believe you are ill from a bacterial infection
- ❑ If seeking medical attention, be sure to write down the species of aquatic life you were exposed to in order to ensure proper treatment

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for medical diagnosis. If you suspect you or a family member may be infected, seek medical attention.

Additional information can be found at the Centers for Disease Control at [cdc.gov/healthypets](https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets) and [petco.com/caresheet](https://www.petco.com/caresheet), or contact your local veterinarian or family physician.

