

CDC warns again of salmonella danger from baby turtles

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Tiny turtles are the cause of a outbreak of 51 cases of salmonella in 21 states, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [announced Friday](#).

In almost half of cases, the illness has been so severe as to require hospitalization, although no deaths have been reported.

Babies and [young kids](#) are most often the victims after handling baby turtles: 10 of the patients were under the age of 1, while 17 patients were under the age of 5, the CDC noted.

Federal law bans the sale of small turtles as pets, but "despite the ban, some online retailers, pet stores and roadside markets continue to sell small turtles," the agency said.

This isn't the first time salmonella outbreaks have been linked to young turtles: In the summer of 2022, [a similar outbreak](#) hospitalized at least five people. That outbreak was linked to turtles ordered from an [online retailer](#).

Typically, [salmonella infection](#) includes diarrhea, fever and [stomach cramps](#) that develop sometime between six hours and six days after exposure to the bacteria.

The illness usually lasts about four to seven days, though some people will develop [severe symptoms](#) requiring hospitalization. Children younger than 5, adults 65 and older and people with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable.

The CDC advises not buying turtles with shells that are less than 4 inches long. The agency says turtles longer than 4 inches should be purchased only from reputable pet stores or rescues. Here are some of the CDC's other recommendations:

- Don't get a turtle if you are in a group more vulnerable to salmonella.
- Stay healthy by always washing your hands after touching,

feeding or caring for your turtle. Ensure that your children are also washing their hands well after handling the turtle.

- If you have a turtle you no longer want, do not discard it. Call your local pet store or reptile rescue for help.

State health departments can answer questions about infections in specific states.

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has more on [salmonella](#).

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