

# Diseases you can get from your dog

## Newsflash: Rabies is not the only thing you can get from your pooch

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Most infectious diseases are species specific, which means those that infect lower animals generally do not spread to humans. Still, there are more than 200 infectious diseases, called “zoonoses” that animals can transmit to humans, but only a few of these can be passed on by dogs, the more common ones that you should know about are as follows:



### Rabies

The most dreadful disease that dogs can transmit to humans is, without a doubt, rabies. Rabies is caused by a virus that resides in the saliva of infected animals and is transmitted to a human through a bite, or rarely, when the animal's saliva gets in contact with a scratch or fresh break in the skin. Rabies attacks the nervous system and is invariably fatal. Campylobacter and Giardia

Campylobacter is a bacterial infection which causes diarrhea, abdominal pain, and fever. The campylobacter bacteria reside in the intestines of infected dogs and can be transmitted to a human by direct contact or by intake of contaminated food or water. Giardia, on the other hand, is a protozoon that causes diarrhea, stomach cramps, and nausea. It is most commonly contracted by drinking infected water but may also be picked up by contact with infected animals or soil.

### Skin Diseases

Skin disorders that can be acquired from pet dogs include ringworm and scabies (“galis aso,” in Filipino). Ringworm is caused by several types of fungi that humans can get by touching infected dogs. Typically, the lesions of ring-

worm consist of itchy ringshaped skin patches. Scabies, on the other hand, is caused by mites that burrow under the skin. It is characterized by itchy pinpoint red rash, scaly skin, and hair loss.

Parasites Parasites that plague dogs such as the round worm toxocaracanis- can also affect humans. These worms reside in the intestine of infected dogs. When their eggs pass in the stools, they contaminate the soil. If ingested by humans, the eggs hatch in the intestines and the larvae migrate to various parts of the body. Toxocara infestation can give rise to fever, cough, skin rashes, and swollen lymph nodes (“kulani,” in Filipino). Migrating larvae can also damage vital organs including the liver and eyes.

Ectoparasites that infest pets such as fleas and ticks can also turn on, and bite, humans, and give rise to itchy lesions that are prone to secondary bacterial infection.

Measures to prevent dog zoonoses

Although a pet dog can make you and your son sick, you can easily prevent this from happening by adopting certain measures.

- Keep your dog healthy. Feed him or her healthy diet and clean drinking water. Bathe and groom your dog regularly have him or her completely and regularly immunized (especially for rabies), dewormed, and fleacontrolled.
- If you do not intend to breed your dog, have him/her neutered or spayed
- Keep you and your dog’s house clean.
- Avoid kissing your pet or letting it lick your face.
- Avoid contact with your dog’s feces, use disposable gloves or plastic bags to pick up and dispose of your pet’s stool.
- Observe good personal hygiene. Wash your hands regularly, especially before eating and after handling your dog or his or her toys.

Benefits of having a pet dog

On the whole, I think it’s worth having a dog provided you can take good care of it. The physical, mental, and emotional health benefits conferred by pets on us definitely outweigh the health risks they expose us to.

Countless scientific studies show that a pet can be good for people of all ages. A pet dog can ease loneliness, reduce stress, anxiety and depression, enhance self-worth and self-esteem, decrease blood pressure, cholesterol and triglyceride levels, promote social interaction, and encourage exercise and outdoor activities. Pet owners are generally healthier than non-owners. They make fewer trips to doctors, and, when they become ill, they develop fewer complications and recover faster.

Of all age groups, children have the most to gain from owning a pet. For kids, the pet represents a source of security that eases subconscious fears and worries.

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