



Diseases and stray or wild cats

Cats are not a common source of diseases for humans. However, cats, like many animals, can carry diseases that can make humans sick.

Do not touch stray cats

Cats' mouths and claws can contain many harmful bacteria and viruses. Never provoke a cat to attack you. Do not bother the cat when it is eating, and do not try to move a cat with your unprotected hands. Use a long stick to push it along or heavy gloves if you must move it. Do not approach kittens, as the mother may be near and is likely to attack you. Please teach these points to children also.

If a stray cat bites or scratches you, wash the area thoroughly with soap and water right away. See your doctor or nurse immediately.

Cats can carry rabies

Stray cats may come in contact with bats, raccoons and skunks which sometimes carry rabies. The rabies virus is in the saliva of a sick animal. Since cats "wash" themselves by putting saliva on their paws, then grooming their fur, cat scratches as well as cat bites may carry the rabies virus. Anyone who gets a bite or scratch that may have been contaminated with saliva from a wild cat or kitten should see a health care provider about preventive treatment for rabies immediately.

Cat feces

Cat feces contain many types of bacteria and parasites that can make humans sick. People should wash their hands with soap and water after any contact with cat feces. Also, many parasites in the feces of cats are not infectious when they first come out of the cat's body, but become infectious later. That is why it makes good health sense to clean up after cats right away. Always wash your hands well after cleaning up after cats.

One-eyed cats

Cats get colds just like we do. The cold germs are not easily passed to us. Wild cats can get eye infections from their colds, and it is not uncommon for the eye to swell shut and even collapse. It is unfortunate for the cat but not much danger to humans.

Cats can carry these diseases that can be passed to humans:

| BACTERIAL DISEASES | PARASITIC DISEASES | VIRAL DISEASES | FUNGAL DISEASES |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| salmonella | toxoplasmosis | rabies | ringworm |
| Q fever | tapeworm | | |
| campylobacter | roundworm | | |
| cat scratch disease | hookworm | | |

**For more information, please contact
Boston Public Health Commission
Communicable Disease Control
(617) 534-5611 or www.bphc.org**