

Advice for parents on visits to settings involving contact with animals

Visitor attractions involving contact with animals are understandably popular with parents and children but do carry a risk from infectious diseases.

All animals naturally carry a range of micro-organisms, some of which can be transmitted to humans, where they may cause ill health. Some of these, such as E. coli O157 or Cryptosporidium (Crypto), present a serious health hazard and have the potential to cause serious illness which may be particularly severe in young children. We see many cases of Crypto each year in the Health Protection Hub, particularly among children, and it's a miserable experience for them and their parents.

Following these practical steps will help your child stay safe and healthy:

- Children should wash their hands in the following four situations: after contacting animals, before eating, before and after using play equipment, and when leaving site. It will help to explain why they must wash their hands thoroughly in these situations and to show them what proper handwashing looks like. Bear in mind that alcohol gel is not a suitable substitute for proper hand washing with soap and running water – it doesn't work against Crypto.
- Do not suck fingers or put hands, pens, pencils or crayons etc. in mouths.
- Check that cuts, grazes etc. on children's hands are covered with a waterproof dressing.
- Do not kiss animals.
- Eat only food that you have brought with you or food for human consumption that you have bought on the premises, and eat only in designated areas.
- Never eat food that has fallen to the ground.
- Never taste animal foods.
- Children should not eat, drink or chew anything (including sweets) outside the areas designated for eating at the visitor attraction.
- Where possible, clean or clean and change footwear before leaving. The site should have facilities to clean footwear and pushchair/pram wheels as you leave the site. Wash hands after cleaning/changing footwear.
- Do not use or pick up tools (e.g. spades and forks) or touch other work equipment unless permitted to do so by site staff.
- Do not climb on to walls, fences, gates or animal pens etc. Some animals put their feet on the fences of their pens and contaminate them with faecal matter.
- Listen carefully and follow the instructions and information given by the site staff.
- Do not wander off into unsupervised or prohibited areas e.g. manure heaps.
- Allow plenty of time for hand washing before eating or leaving the site so that the children do not have to rush.
- If a member of your group shows signs of illness (e.g. sickness or diarrhoea) after a visit, visit the doctor and explain that they have had recent contact with animals. Please also contact the attraction you visited and inform them of the illness.

Water Safety Tips for Parents

The Canal & River Trust have produced some information on water safety for parents based on their SAFE message – Stay Away From the Edge, with a focus on getting children to “Hold hands and take two steps back” when by the water side. They have a video you can watch with your children featuring Maddie Moate from CBeebies:



Other tips

- Always hold your child's hand when by the water
- Make sure the brake is on the pram or pushchair when stationary
- Make sure to look out for other people on busy towpaths before stepping back
- Head to the [Explorers website](#) to download learning activities to help you toddlers and pre-schoolers learn how to stay safe by the water.

What to do if a child falls into the water

- There may be other people around, so shout for help as loudly as you can.
- If you have other children with you, make sure they are safe.
- Dial 999 and ask for the fire and rescue service. Explain your location clearly - use road names, bridge numbers, what3words and describe any landmarks.
- Lie down on the ground and try to reach them in the water. Use a tree branch, stick or an item of clothing to reach out to them. Don't get in the water yourself. If they have fallen in, it's likely that they won't be too far away from the edge.

- If you can, haul them out of the water. Do this by lying down on the ground and pulling them out by grabbing their clothes. Don't pull them out from a standing position as you are more likely to fall in the water yourself.
- If you can't get them out, lie on the ground and hold on to them until help arrives.

You can visit their website here: [Water safety tips for parents | Canal & River Trust](https://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/water-safety/tips-for-parents)
([canalrivertrust.org.uk](https://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk))