

BACTERIAL ALERT!

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Bacterial Alert - "The Kiss of Death"

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Our companion parrots LOVE our mouths - to kiss us, eat from our mouths, feed us, clean our teeth (they're all budding dental hygienists!) We love them in return - and want to kiss them back, share our food, nuzzle, and bond. Unfortunately, the human mouth is a breeding ground for many nasty pathogens harmful to birds, especially bacteria, like E. Coli. I constantly remind people NOT to let their birdies come in contact with their saliva, yet it keeps happening.

I know how hard it is to resist a cute little beaker and exploring tongue on our face and lips, yet the consequences can be deadly. I've known people who routinely fed their unweaned baby parrots from their own mouths, or who pre-chewed nuts for their birds, or regularly let their buddy clean every single tooth in the evening as they sit and watch TV together. It seems innocuous enough - most of us don't worry about catching anything from our birds and, in fact, there are very few diseases that WE can get from THEM.

But the danger we don't think of is from US infecting THEM!! We humans have very different digestive systems and immune systems from our parrots, so many of the common bacteria in our mouths and bodies that don't make us sick can be devastating to our birds. In fact, there's not many places on earth nastier than the human mouth!! (Just ask a doctor about the seriousness of a human bite!) Last year, some friends of mine lost one of their beloved Quakers, and spent many months nursing the other one back to health, due to an E. Coli infection from human saliva.

Just recently, another friend discovered that her African Grey has a bacterial infection from - you guessed it! - SALIVA!! Fortunately, it's mild, but he has to undergo a 10 day course of antibiotics nonetheless. So, please, please, PLEASE - resist the temptation to "swap spit" with your birdie - we can share our love in much safer ways that don't put our loved ones at risk of illness, or even death!!