



Tank setup:

1. An appropriately sized aquarium

- We recommend a minimum of 20 gallons for one adult axolotl. Add 10 gallons for each additional axolotl at minimum. Bigger is always better though more water will help keep your tank more stable. Keep in mind that floor space is better than height since they spend most of their time on the bottom.

2. Filtration

- Strong water flow can stress your axolotl. Use a low flow filter such as a sponge or canister filter with a spray bar. Hang on the back filters are ok, if you can find one that has adjustable water flow that would be ideal.
- Always aim to filter for a tank double the size of what you have decided on. *For example: for a 20 gallon, shoot for filtration to accomodate at minimum a 40 gallon tank.*
- Air stones are not necessary, but some axolotls like them and we find that it helps with gill growth and fullness. You can also add a sponge filter in the place of an air stone to add extra filtration and air for the gills.

3. Seeded filter

- A seeded filter is a filter such as a sponge filter that has been running in an established tank, it may even just be media from an established filter. It contains the beneficial bacteria that you are working on building up through the cycling process. By adding a filter with some of that beneficial bacteria on it, it will help your cycle along much faster. This is not a necessity but will save you a lot of time cycling your tank. **We do carry these in our online shop!**

4. Temperature gauge

- You will need some sort of temperature gauge to monitor water temperature and ensure it stays between 60-68 degrees Fahrenheit. We personally prefer to use the digital thermometers, they are easy to read and you don't have the risk of a glass thermometer breaking inside of your tank.

5. Substrate

- Axolotls will fit anything into their mouth that is as large as their head, when they eat they vacuum up their food and anything else they find. Because of this it is not a good idea to use things like pebbles or gravel in your tank. If you want a substrate on the bottom your best bet is to get a fine sand. Anything larger will get stuck in your axolotls digestive system and it can be fatal. One thing we love about sand is that it helps hold the tank cycle better.

TIP: Keep in mind however, if you are purchasing an axolotl under 5" they can not be safely housed on sand because there is an increased risk of impaction.

- Many axolotl owners prefer a "bare bottom" tank, meaning no substrate, just the glass of the tank. Some also use tile cut to the size of the tank bottom, this is acceptable and also provides aesthetic to the tanks appearance. Both options are great because it is easy to clean and eliminates the risk of impaction.

6. Décor

- Axolotls like to hide so it is a good idea to provide a couple hiding spots for your axolotl to hide in. You can get creative with this; we like to use clay pots for hides, they are inexpensive and look nice. You can also use things like PVC pipe, coffee mugs and aquarium décor from your local pet store. When choosing décor it is important that there are no sharp edges inside or outside that may cut your axolotls skin. Also, make sure it is clean and aquarium safe.
- All décor must be twice the size of your axolotls head, this is to ensure it can not fit into its mouth.
- Plants are also good to have in the tank, either artificial or live. When looking for live plants, look for plants that prefer cold water and low light. Live plants are nice because they help remove nitrates. Some that we have had success with are: anacharis, anubias, hornwort, water sprite & java fern. *TIP: it helps plant growth if you use a full spectrum aquarium light.*

7. Water De-chlorinator

- Lastly, when you fill your tank you are going to need to add a de-chlorinator to make the water safe. The only brand we use and recommend for axolotls is Seachem Prime. You will need to add this to all new water you add to your tank moving forward as well, so always have it on hand!

8. Fan or chiller

- Some axolotl keepers prefer chillers that are made specifically for aquatic use to keep the water at a steady cool temperature, depending on where you live and where your tank will be kept this may be something you want to invest in.
- Fans work well too, they can cause rapid evaporation, so just refill your tank as you need to. There are fans made specifically for aquariums or you can use a household fan purchased online or at a local store.
- These are usually needed in the summer months as it is important to keep the temperature between 60-68° F. Temps above this can cause illness.

9. Lid

- Some axolotl owners worry about their axolotl jumping out of the tank. If you are one of those you can purchase a lid that fits your tank wherever you buy the tank.
- Keep in mind with a lid it may be difficult to cool your water utilizing a standard fan, you may want to look into a fan that is made especially for your size aquarium that you can use with the lid.
- We prefer "egg crate" sheets that you can purchase at most hardware stores. These are typically white and used in commercial ceiling applications for return vent covers. They are plastic and can be cut to size to fit on top of your aquarium while still allowing air circulation.

Tank Mates

You can house axolotls together but there are some things you need to know before doing this.

- **They have to be the same gender and close in size.** *Why?* Because males and females will breed once sexually mature. They do not know when to stop breeding, females should not be bred more than twice a year. It can lower the female's immune system and she could become very ill and it could result in death. For this reason we strongly encourage you to start off with just one juvenile axolotl until you know its gender, this can become obvious sometime between 6-18 months of age. At that time you can then purchase a second gendered adult axolotl of the same sex.
- **Minimum requirements need to be met.** *What does that mean?* Ideally you want 20 gallons per axolotl, but you can get by with 20 gallons for one and 10 more for each additional axolotl.
- **Ensure that they are well fed,** *Why is this important?* If they are hungry they will nip each other's limbs thinking it is food.
- **Provide ample hiding places.** Axolotls like to hide, it is important you provide them a hiding place for multiple axolotls for their comfort. This could be hides or lots of plants, anywhere they can go and hide and relax and get away from tank mates.
- **Ensure proper filtration.** When housing multiple axolotls we like to add additional filtration to help with the added bio load.
- **NO SNAILS, FISH, PLECOS, ETC!!!!** *Why?* It is just not a safe practice for several reasons. They can bring diseases into your tank and get your axolotls sick. Your axolotls will eat anything they can vacuum into their mouths, they can become impacted. These other species may also pick and eat at your axolotl.

Tank Maintenance

Tank and water maintenance is very important to your axolotls overall quality of life and their health as well. You should prepare yourself for weekly maintenance with an axolotl aside from daily feeding.

- **Water Changes:** You will want to check your parameters weekly using your API Freshwater test kit to determine how much water will need to be changed. Evaporation will naturally occur, keep in mind that topping off your tank with freshwater is not the same as a water change. It is important to remove existing water to remove ammonia and nitrites otherwise it is still in there if you just top off. We typically do 30-50% water changes once a week, and add Microblyft Special blend bi-weekly after the water change

as directed on the bottle. Also, always add Seachem prime to any new water that you put into the tank!

TIP: Investing in a Python water syphon will save your back and save you tons of time! My only caution to using this is to remove your axolotl when using it to avoid it getting accidentally sucked up in the syphon.

- **Spot cleaning:** We use a turkey baster daily to remove any uneaten food or waste left behind by your axolotl.
- **Filter media:** We do not recommend 'cleaning' your filter media regularly, this can remove the beneficial bacteria and cause the cycle to crash. What we do is shake and rinse the sponges or media in a bucket of dirty tank water during a water change. Do not rinse them in tap water, the chlorine will remove your beneficial bacteria that lives in the sponges. If you are using a filter that has disposable media you may need to change that every so often. We have found that we can usually rinse it out a couple times in a bucket of dirty tank water before having to dispose of it. When replacing these, Microblift makes a special product that is a gel for filter media that contains beneficial bacteria. You can add this to the new filter. We typically maintain our filters once a month.
- **Décor & Glass:** Algae builds up over time, we recommend a magnetic glass cleaner to clean the glass on the inside of your tank. They also sell hand held scrubbers as well. Décor may need to be removed and cleaned off occasionally to remove algae buildup. We typically clean glass weekly and décor once a month.
- **Deep cleaning:** You will know when your tank is in need of a "deep clean" meaning, removing more water, syphoning of sand etc. We prefer not to clean the filter media at the same time that we do a deep cleaning. The reason is, when we do a deep clean we are removing a lot of the beneficial bacteria, if you do the filter media at the same time it will remove anymore and could cause issues with the cycle. Instead we just wait and do them on different weeks.

Ideal water parameters:

Ammonia	0ppm is ideal (anything over 0ppm needs to be addressed as ammonia is toxic)
Nitrites	0ppm (anything over 0ppm needs to be addressed as nitrites are toxic)
Nitrates	5ppm - 20ppm (low levels = cycle crash & high levels over 20ppm = toxic)
PH	7.6 - 8

Diet:

You are going to want to feed your axolotl mostly staple foods, treats are ok on occasion. All of our axolotls are raised mainly on live foods. We also feed salmon pellets when they reach 3 inches, most of our axolotls are able to eat both live and non live foods by the time you bring them home.

Staple foods:

- **European nightcrawlers** - these are different from Canadian nightcrawlers, they are smaller and less messy. Your best bet to buy any type of live worm is a business who sells live fishing bait or a pet supply store. We do offer these on our website for local pickup only.
- **Earthworms** - do not get them from outside! They can carry parasites and or contaminates unsafe for your axolotl.
- **Red wigglers** - these do produce a bitter slim that may cause your axolotl to spit them out. If your axolotl does not like them can cull them before feeding (run warm water over the worms so that they are no longer alive and can not produce this.)
- **Live black worms** - you may be able to find these at a pet supply store, but most commonly they need to be ordered online and shipped to you overnight. We

occasionally have small amounts in stock for local pickup, please send us a message if interested.

- **Salmon pellets made especially for axolotls** - If you choose to feed pellets, ensure that they do not contain land animals or an abundance of plant material. We do have a great source for high quality soft sinking salmon pellets on our website.!
- **Repashy grub pie** can also be used, but I will warn you it can be messy.
- Treats:
 - Blood worms, Brine shrimp, Wax worms, Butter worms, Black soldier fly larvae, Raw shrimp, Raw salmon

The below chart can help guide you as to how often you should feed your axolotl and what is acceptable.

Juvenile (3-8 inches)	Adult (8+ inches)
Feed 1-2x a day	Feed 2-3x a week
*Live worms *Live black worms *Salmon Pellets *Repashy Grub Pie	*Live worms *Live black worms *Salmon Pellets *Repashy Grub Pie *Raw Shrimp *Raw Salmon *Live shrimp

Feeding notes:

- It is always good practice to remove any uneaten food before it fouls up the water, pellets and non live foods need to be removed sooner than live foods. Most worms will stay alive in the water for a fair amount of time before they die and mold.
- If you start noticing extra cloudy water or a lot of detritus worms or snails in your tank it is a sign you may be over feeding. It is a good idea to cut back the amount of food you are feeding your axolotl, the uneaten food is a major cause for these things and not to mention can negatively affect your water parameters.
- Some axolotls eat more than others, so you will need to feel out your axolotl and adjust your feeding amount and schedule accordingly.
- If you choose to feed live worms, which we highly recommend, having a worm farm is a great investment. You can make an easy DIY worm farm or, a fellow breeder sells worm farms on her site: <https://themottledlotl.com/worm-farms/>

First Aid

We are providing you basic information about different medications that are safe for axolotls and natural methods for treatment of mild illness. However we do highly recommend that any time there is illness with your axolotl you seek an exotic veterinarian for professional diagnosis.

Anytime you notice your axolotl may be sick the first thing you want to do is remove it from the tank and tub it. Refer to our website 'axolotl care' section under 'tubbing' for more info on how to do this. When your axolotl is sick, we recommend doing 2 water changes a day. Once in the morning, once in the evening.

Below are some items that are good to keep on hand in your axolotl first aid kit in case your axolotl gets sick or has fungus. It is also good practice to locate an exotic vet near you who has experience treating axolotls and keep their information available if needed. Even if you do not need one at the time, you will thank us later when you need them so you do not have to stress about finding one later on.

Note: these are just a few basic items, there are others that will treat less common illnesses you may need.

A fellow breeder has axolotl First Aid kits you can purchase with pretty much everything you may need that is available over the counter: <https://themottledlotl.com/products/pharmacy/>

- **Indian almond leaves** - these release tannins that help fight against bacteria, fungi and other similar organisms naturally. You can use these as a preventative or as a remedy for mild illnesses and injuries.
- **Aquarium salt** - Use this to make salt baths to treat mild illnesses and fungus. Simply dissolve 1 teaspoon per 1 liter of water, add Seachem Prime to remove any chlorine. Soak your axolotl in the bath 1-2 times per day (depending on severity of illness or fungus) for 10 minutes. Repeat as necessary.
- **Holtfreter's Salt Solution** - One solution you can make and add to your water is Holtfreter's solution. This solution helps keep down fungus and helps your axolotl's immune system. While Axolotls are a freshwater amphibian, adding these salts does not change the water from fresh to saltwater, since the amount of salt is small in comparison.
 - Here is the Recipe:
 - Mix the following into 5 gallons of dechlorinated water:
 - Mix 3 tablespoons sea salt or aquarium salt (NEVER use iodized salt!)
 - 1 teaspoon Epsom salt (containing no scents or dyes)
 - 1/8 teaspoon NuSalt (a salt replacer found near Morton Salt, it is potassium chloride)
- **API General Cure** - treats a variety of parasites.
- **Methylene Blue** - make sure not to use too much, you want the water to just be lightly tinted blue (like the light blue on the nitrite test kit for 0 ppm), otherwise you may be using too much and it can stain your axolotl & is harmful.
- **Seachem Kanaplex** - treats some fungal and bacterial diseases.
- **Seachem Metroplex** - treats several protozoan and anaerobic bacterial diseases.
- **Seachem Focus** - Used to bind other medication to food to treat internal bacterial infections.

Tubbing your axolotl

- Sometimes your axolotl may need to be tubbed for health reasons, tank cleaning, while you cycle a tank or if you move. When we say "tubbing" we mean placing it in a plastic tub/container of some sort as a temporary housing situation.
- Be sure when tubbing your axolotl that you keep them in clean dechlorinated water (use only Seachem Prime for this) The water has to be changed daily, 100 %, if you have them tubbed for longer than a day. We highly recommend testing your tap water with your API Freshwater master test kit prior to putting your axolotl in. Be sure the results are in the safe range (see chart under the tank Maintenance section) DO NOT USE DISTILLED WATER! If using RO water please research how to re add minerals to the water before placing your axolotl in it. We do not have experience with RO water so will be unable to help advise you how to do this.
- Remember to wipe out the bottom of sides when you change the water to remove buildup of bacteria. DO NOT USE SOAP!!!! Axolotls are very sensitive to chemicals as they are amphibians and absorb through their skin.
- Be sure the tub is big enough for them to move around and filled with enough water so they can be completely under water.
- KEEP THE WATER COOL!! 60-65 F is ideal!!!!
- It's not too common but Axolotls can jump out of the tub. You can put the lid with ventilation on the tub or you can put something like a cooling rack for baking over it to ensure they don't jump out. If you have a cat, a lid is a must. We have seen several cat attack victims on social media and the outcome is not good.