HAMSTER CARE GUIDE

A Quick Reference for Families

Hamsters & Families

- Hamsters are small, fast, and may bite if frightened, sick, in pain, or awakened suddenly.
- Handle gently and supervise children.
- Hold close to the floor or over a secure surface to reduce injury from falls.

Diet Essentials

- Feed a commercial rat or mouse pellet containing 15–20% protein.
- Keep fresh water available at all times in a sipping-tip bottle.
- Offer only small amounts of fruit, vegetables, or rodent treats.
- Treats should make up **no more than 10%** of the diet.
- Check hidden food stores and remove spoiled food.

Housing & Temperature

- Use an escape-proof, well-ventilated enclosure with a solid floor.
- Provide room for separate nesting, eating, and exercise areas.
- The enclosure should be at least 6 inches high; 8 inches or more allows deeper bedding.
- Keep the enclosure at about 64–79°F (18–26°C).
- Hamsters are usually safest **housed alone**.

✕ Foods & Medicines to Avoid

- Limit seeds because hamsters may select them instead of balanced pellets.
- Extra vitamins are usually unnecessary with a complete diet.

✕ **Never give** medicine or antibiotic cream unless a veterinarian specifically directs it.

- Some antibiotics can seriously harm a hamster's digestive system.

Bedding & Nesting

- Provide deep, clean, absorbent, low-dust bedding.
- Use paper bedding or shredded paper.
- Provide plain tissues or unprinted paper-towel strips for nesting.

✕ **Avoid** cedar, pine, cotton balls, and similar fibrous nesting material.

Teeth & Routine Care

- Hamsters' front teeth grow continuously.
- Provide safe chew items and have the mouth and teeth checked during veterinary examinations.
- Arrange an examination soon after obtaining the hamster.
- No vaccines are required or recommended for hamsters.

Safety & Exercise

- Provide a solid-surface exercise wheel and safe tubes or boxes sized for the hamster.
- Supervise all time outside the enclosure.
- Protect the hamster from electrical cords, furniture, hidden spaces, falls, dogs, and cats.
- Prevent escape; loose hamsters can be difficult to find and may be injured.

Warning Signs

- Seek veterinary care for inactivity, appetite or weight loss, eye, ear, or nose discharge, a hunched back, abnormal walking, rough or missing fur, diarrhea or "wet tail," or trouble breathing.
- Changes in urine or feces, wounds, or staining around the rear also need veterinary attention.
- Diarrhea can quickly cause dehydration.

FINAL REMINDER

Hamsters need secure solitary housing, deep safe bedding, balanced pellets, exercise, gentle handling, and prompt veterinary care.

Veterinary sources: MSD Veterinary Manual: Providing a Home for a Hamster • MSD Veterinary Manual: Routine Health Care of Hamsters • MSD Veterinary Manual: Disorders and Diseases of Hamsters • VCA Animal Hospitals: Feeding Rodents • VCA Animal Hospitals: Housing Rodents • VCA Animal Hospitals: New Small Mammal Veterinary Visit •

This guide is educational and does not replace advice or examination by a veterinarian.