

# Hedgehogs

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Hedgehogs are fascinating little pets that don't require a lot of care. Once a hedgehog is used to being handled, it will unroll from its protective ball and flatten its spines, so it won't be so prickly to hold.

Hedgehogs are mostly awake in the early morning and evening. When awake, they are very active and it's fun to watch them dig, go through tubes, push toys around and run on their exercise wheel. They should get at least an hour every evening out of their cage to explore.

Because hedgehogs are a little prickly, they are best for older children and adults.

One hedgehog or more?

Hedgehogs are solitary animals and should be kept one to a cage.

## Feeding

Give your hedgehog a special food made specifically for hedgehogs. They also enjoy small amounts of meat, egg, and commercially raised insects such as mealworms and crickets. Treats are great for training and strengthening the bond between you and your hedgehogs and meat-based treats for cats or ferrets can comprise 10% of their diet. Hedgehogs can have a tendency to get fat, so don't let your hedgehog eat too much.

## Housing

A hedgehog cage should be at least 18" X 24" X 12" high, filled with a thin layer of bedding. Hedgehogs are good climbers and tend to try to escape from their cage, so it needs to be secure. For bedding you should use paper or organic pellets such as Carefresh. Do not use pine or cedar shavings since they cause respiratory infection. Most hedgehogs will use a litter box and you can use plain unscented clay cat litter in it.

## Accessories

Hedgehogs need a water bottle, non-tip food dishes, and a nest box. They also need a large solid surface exercise wheel. Hedgehogs also enjoy tubes, climbing toys such as ramps and branches, and small toys they can push around.

## Sanitation

Clean the litter box as needed, and clean the cage perhaps 1-2 times a week. Clean the water bottle weekly, scrubbing all parts.

## **Maintenance**

Hedgehogs have a strange habit called anointing where they cover themselves with their saliva in response to new smells. A hedgehog that gets dirty can be brushed with a toothbrush dipped in water, and if very dirty, sprayed with a water bottle. Some hedgehogs may need their toenails trimmed occasionally.

## **Health care**

The most common health problems in hedgehogs are fleas and mites. Veterinary Pet Insurance ([www.petinsurance.com](http://www.petinsurance.com)) now offers health insurance policies for hedgehogs.

## **Special needs**

Hedgehogs need at least 10 hours of light per day or they will go into hibernation. Some hedgehogs, especially young ones, like to taste things. Occasionally, after a hedgehog licks your hand, it will nip, although this will rarely break the skin. Replace a hedgehog that does this back in its cage.

## **Life cycle**

Hedgehogs live an average of 3 1/2 years, although it's possible for them to live 10 years. The gestation period is 34-40 days and the average litter size is 3-5. Baby hedgehogs open their eyes at 17-20 days and can be weaned at 5-6 weeks.

## **Expert Help**

If you have questions about your hedgehog, do not hesitate to contact us. We will be happy to help you choose a hedgehog care book for more complete information. You, your veterinarian, and the staff here at the store will form the team, which will be responsible for your hedgehog's well being.

## **Supplies Checklist**

Cage	Exercise wheel	Litter box
Bedding	Climbing toys and tubes	Litter
Water bottle	Push toys	Treats
Dry-food dish		Nest box
Hedgehog food		

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