

ball python

care sheet



Ball pythons are named for their habit of curling themselves up into a tight ball.

facts

average adult size: 4 to 5 feet long
average life span: up to 30 years
with proper care
diet: carnivore

Will reach adult size in 3 years, under ideal conditions; upgrade habitat size as your snake grows.



Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, refer to the Sources section or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

diet

A well-balanced ball python diet consists of:

- Appropriately sized frozen rodents, thawed/warmed to above room temperature.
- Do not use a microwave to defrost frozen rodents and do not prepare them in the same area that you prepare food. If it is unavoidable, be sure to thoroughly disinfect the area. See the Feeding Frozen/Thawed Foods Care Sheet for more information.
- **If feeding your snake live rodents, do not leave them unattended. Live rodents can injure the snake, sometimes fatally.**

feeding

Things to remember when feeding your ball python:

- Feed juveniles once a week, adults every one to two weeks.
- Feed in a separate tank so that your snake doesn't associate your hand or the habitat being opened with feeding.
- Fresh, clean, chlorine-free

water should be available at all times in a large enough bowl for your ball python to soak in.

housing

- Size - Appropriately sized and shaped habitat for a baby ball python to accommodate normal behavior and exercise, at least a 20L. A 40B tank is recommended for an adult ball python.
- Substrate - Aspen shavings, mulch-type such as coconut fiber bedding or reptile bark; dampened sphagnum moss.
- Habitat - Provide a hiding area just large enough for your snake to fit inside and a branch or décor to climb on. Maintain 40 to 60% humidity; higher during shedding.
- Temperature - Temperature gradient (95°F for the warm end and 78° for the cool end); recommend radiant heat.
- Lighting - Provide 8 to 12 hours of light daily. Don't leave white light on at all times; a nocturnal or infrared light should be used at night.

- Do not house different snake species together.

normal behavior

- As your snake gets ready to shed, their eyes will turn a milky blue/grey over the course of a few days and their body color will start to dull and develop a whitish sheen. May become irritable; avoid handling if possible.
- Appetite may vary.

habitat maintenance

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the habitat at least once a week; place snake in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all traces of bleach smell; dry the tank and furnishings completely and add clean substrate.

grooming and hygiene

- Snakes will regularly shed their skin; ensure humidity of habitat is at appropriate level to allow snake to shed properly.
- Never try to remove eye caps by yourself. Seek

veterinary care.

signs of a healthy animal

- Active and alert
- Clear eyes (except when shedding)
- Eats regularly
- Healthy skin
- Regularly sheds skin in one complete piece
- Free of mites and ticks

red flags

- Unusually frequent or infrequent shedding
- Vomiting
- Lethargic or reluctant to eat
- Abnormal feces
- Bumps or spots on skin
- Labored breathing
- Difficulty shedding
- White, cheesy substance in mouth

common health issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Dermatitis	Blisters, rapid shedding caused by an unclean habitat or one that is too cold or damp.	Consult your veterinarian, clean the habitat and lower humidity.
Respiratory disease	Labored breathing, mucus in mouth or nostrils. Can be caused by a habitat that is too cold or damp.	Consult your veterinarian and keep snake warm and dry.
Stomatitis	White, cheesy substance in the mouth, loss of teeth and appetite. If untreated, can be fatal.	Immediately consult your veterinarian.
Ticks and mites	Parasites on skin, can transmit disease.	Consult your veterinarian.

If you notice any of these signs, contact your veterinarian.

shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized habitat
- Substrate
- Moss
- Large water dish
- Hideaway place
- Climbing décor
- Plants
- Heat light/emitter
- Heat fixture
- Under-tank heater (optional)
- Thermometer
- Humidity gauge
- Book about ball pythons

sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on ball pythons and the variety of private brand products available for the care and happiness of your new pet. All private brand products carry a 100% money-back guarantee.

Because all reptiles are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your reptile or habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

Pregnant women, children under the age of 5, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing or caring for reptiles and should consider not having a reptile as a pet.

Go to cdc.gov/healthypets and petco.com/caresheet for more information about reptiles and disease.

This Care Sheet can cover the care needs of other species. Go to petco.com for more information.

