Plecos are well-known algae eaters that originated in the rivers of the Amazon jungle in South America. Plecos attach themselves to hard surfaces with specially adapted mouth parts. They are scavengers and will eat almost anything. Recommended for beginning aquarists.

**facts**

- **average adult size:** up to 20+ inches long, depending on species
- **average life span:** depends on species
- **diet:** omnivore
- **minimum aquarium size:** 20+ gallons, depending on species
- **water temperature:** 72 to 82°F depending on species, as some prefer temperatures outside these parameters

*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 pleco diet consists of:
- Algae and sinking algae wafers.
- Supplement with raw zucchini as a treat once or twice a week. Raw vegetables should be anchored near the bottom of the aquarium.

feeding
Things to remember when feeding your pleco:
- Feed daily.
- Typically feeds at night.
- Some plecos require driftwood as part of their diet.

housing
- Keep in an appropriately sized aquarium; provide proper filtration to maintain health. Acrylic aquariums are not recommended for large plecos as they will scratch the acrylic.
- Stable water quality and parameters are critical to the health of aquatic life. If you are unsure of your water quality, Petco provides free water testing.

characteristics
- Spend most of the time on the bottom or hanging from the side of the aquarium.
- Attach to glass, rocks and other hard surfaces with their mouths.
- Very territorial toward other plecos.
- Will uproot or eat most live plants.
- Primarily nocturnal (active at night).

habitat maintenance
Daily: Check filter, water temperature and other equipment.
Weekly: Check water quality at least once a week.
Monthly: Change 10 to 25% of the total volume of water every 2 to 4 weeks or as needed.
Introduce new inhabitants to the aquarium gradually.

compatibility
- Can be kept with community fish; keep only one pleco per tank.
- Check Petco’s Freshwater Compatibility Care Sheet for species specific information.

common health issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Issue</th>
<th>Symptoms or Causes</th>
<th>Suggested Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fin rot</td>
<td>Frayed or disintegrating fins; the base of the fins usually reddens.</td>
<td>Improve water quality; consult your aquatic veterinarian for treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fungus</td>
<td>White cottony growth and/or discoloration of the eyes.</td>
<td>Quarantine fish; use a commercial antifungal remedy as directed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacterial infections</td>
<td>Cloudy eyes, open sores, and/or reddening of the skin.</td>
<td>Improve water quality; use a commercial antibacterial remedy as directed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich</td>
<td>White spots appear on fins and body; fish rubs against hard objects or swims awkwardly. Rapid respiration.</td>
<td>Quarantine fish immediately; use a commercial ich remedy as directed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you notice any of these signs, test water quality and improve as necessary.
shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized aquarium
- Algae or sinking wafers
- Décor
- Water conditioner
- Filter
- Water test kit
- Full spectrum lighting
- Net
- Thermometer
- Freshwater substrate
- Heater
- Airline tubing
- Airstone
- Air pump
- Book about plecos

sources

Ask a store partner about Petco’s selection of books on plecos 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 aquatic life are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as Atypical *Mycobacterium* and *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your aquatic life 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 aquatic life and should consider not having aquatic life as a pet.

Go to [cdc.gov/healthypets](http://cdcgov/healthypets) and [petco.com/caresheet](http://petco.com/caresheet) for more information about aquatic life and disease.

This care sheet can cover the needs of other species. Go to [petco.com](http://petco.com) for more information.