

Chinchilla FAQs

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Chinchillas are lots of fun to own, but it's important to know how to take care of them so you can keep them happy and healthy. Below, you will find answers to some of your chinchilla questions so you can take good care of your new pet.

How long do chinchillas live?

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Chinchillas can live anywhere from 15 to 22 years, so you will have your chinchilla for a long time!

What do chinchillas eat?

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A chinchilla's daily diet includes grass hay, chinchilla pellet food, and fresh water. You can also give your chinchilla treats. Healthy treats are small pieces of fresh fruit, single raisins, and treats made for chinchillas. Just like you love things like ice cream and candy, your chinchilla loves his treats, so you need to be careful not to give him too many. If you do, he will eat his treats rather than his regular food, and that isn't healthy.

What kind of cage does a chinchilla need?

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Chinchillas love to climb and jump, so you will need a very tall cage with lots of shelves, ladders, and platforms. The smallest amount of floor space should be 24" by 24". Wire cages are better than plastic cages, because chinchillas love to chew on plastic. Cages that have a tray at the bottom that pulls out are easier to clean.

What should I put in my chinchilla's cage?

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Since chinchillas love to jump, the cage should have lots of platforms, shelves, and other places for climbing and jumping. You should also put the following items in the cage:

- ▢ Nest box made from wood or cardboard for sleeping and hiding
- ▢ Aspen wood shavings to line the bottom for bedding
- ▢ Glass water bottles for water
- ▢ Toys
- ▢ Exercise wheel
- ▢ Food bowls that attach to the cage
- ▢ Hay

What kind of toys will chinchillas like?

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Chinchillas like toys that they can chew on and toys that allow them to climb and jump. Some good chinchilla toys include:

- ▢ Branches
 - ▢ Untreated wood toys
 - ▢ Exercise wheel
 - ▢ Platforms
 - ▢ Ladders
 - ▢ Blocks
- Tunnels

Can I let my chinchilla out of his cage to play?

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You sure can, and he will really enjoy exploring your room. However, it's important to watch him closely when he's out of the cage and chinchilla proof your room before letting him out. This means make the room safe for your chinchilla to play in. We also recommend that you tame your chinchilla before letting him out of the cage.

What is "chinchilla proofing?"

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Chinchilla proofing is when you make sure your room is safe for your chinchilla to explore and play in. Chinchillas are curious animals, and they will often bite things to see if they are edible. This is very dangerous if what they bite into is, for example, an electrical cord! Use cord covers to protect your chinchilla from electrical cords. Other things you need to be careful of are:

- Cleaning products (e.g., bleach)
- Heaters (radiators, baseboard heaters, etc)
- Plastic bags
- Plastic things your chinchilla might chew on
- Toilets, buckets of water, and other things your chinchilla could drown in

How can I tame my chinchilla?

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Taming a chinchilla can take a while, so you have to be patient. It takes time to build up trust. Follow the steps below to tame your chinchilla, and remember not to approach your chinchilla until he is used to his new home.

- Talk to him through the cage.
- Sit next to the cage and give him treats through the bars when he comes near you.
- Give him treats through the open cage door.
- Give him a treat from the palm of your hand (hold your hand flat and place the treat in the middle).
- Give him a treat from the middle of your arm (forearm) so he has to climb onto your hand.
- When he's comfortable climbing into your hand, encourage him to climb onto your arms while giving him treats.
- Pet his back softly while giving him treats.

Don't move to the next step until your chinchilla is comfortable with the step you're on. The best time to work on taming your chinchilla is at night.

Why should I play with my chinchilla at night?

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Chinchillas are nocturnal, which means they are most active at night. During the day, your chinchilla likes to sleep and rest, and you can upset him if you disturb his daily routine.

Do I have to groom my chinchilla?

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This may sound silly, but chinchillas clean themselves by taking a dust bath. Regular dust baths keep their fur soft and silky. The chinchilla dust goes through the coat to the skin and removes oil and dirt from your chinchilla's fur. You should give your chinchilla access to his dust bath (a ceramic bath filled with at least two inches of dust) many times a week for about 20 - 60 minutes at a time. Always use chinchilla dusts you buy in a pet store; they are made just for chinchillas.

How do I clean up after my chinchilla?

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You need to clean your chinchilla's cage regularly to keep him healthy. There are some things that need to be done every day and some things that are done once a week.

Every day:

- Clean up any bedding that has been used for a bathroom
- Clean up spills or other messes
- Check any plastic cage accessories and remove them if they have been chewed on
- Give him fresh food and water

Every week:

- Clean and disinfect the entire cage
- Change the droppings pan (if the cage has a pullout pan)
- Wash any accessories
- Replace all bedding