

Fish First Aid

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Situations demanding your immediate attention can quickly arise in your aquarium, threatening the health of your fish and invertebrates. To avoid a disaster, you must be able to recognize and remedy these possible crises.

The first part of this 2-part article outlines the equipment needed to diagnose and correct potential aquatic emergencies.

Test Kits

Always make sure you have a quality [test kit](#) close at hand. At a minimum, your test kit should include tests for ammonia, nitrite, pH, nitrates, and phosphates, and a [hydrometer](#) if it is a saltwater aquarium. Hydrometers measure the specific gravity of your aquarium water, thereby allowing you to draw conclusions regarding its salinity.



Water Changing Equipment



Keep everything you need to perform a water change easily accessible. This equipment should include: aerated, temperature-controlled, and treated water (at least 25% of the aquarium's volume), a [siphon hose](#), buckets or garbage cans large enough to hold 25% of aquarium's water capacity, [powerhead](#) or [air pump](#) for aerating make-up water, [heater](#) and [thermometer](#) for make-up water, [dechlorinator](#) if using tap water and [salt](#) for a saltwater aquarium.

Chemical Medias

Several chemical media are useful in both emergency situations as well as general maintenance. These include: [ammonia-neutralizing media](#), [activated carbon](#) or [organic removing resin](#), [phosphate-](#) and [nitrate-adsorbing media](#), toxic metal or [copper remover](#), appropriate [pH buffer](#), and spare [media bags](#). Follow the manufacturer's instructions to immediately correct improper water chemistry.

The Hospital Aquarium

Most aquarists agree that a small investment of a separate hospital aquarium pays big dividends in helping you protect your large investment of fish. A hospital aquarium is a small tank used to medicate ill fish and separate them from the rest of the aquarium inhabitants. Separating ill fish helps prevent diseases from spreading, and also allows the compromised fish to heal without the stress of its tank mates harassing it. You can also use your hospital aquarium to quarantine new fish before acclimating them to the main display.

An excellent choice for your hospital aquarium is an Eclipse system, which is an all-inclusive "starter" aquarium kit, ranging in size from 2 to 12 gallons. The additions required for an Eclipse system would be dark-colored gravel (to ease stress on the fish), a heater, thermometer, and some form of shelter for the fish (also to reduce stress).

Medications

In the event that illness should become evident in the aquarium, keeping a broad range of treatments in your first aid kit will help you combat the illness quickly. Good emergency medications include [Furanase](#), [Erythromycin](#), and [Copper](#). **NOTE: If you use copper, make sure you use a copper test kit to monitor the levels within the hospital aquarium.**

Part II of this article will cover the typical warning signs of problems within the aquarium, and what to do to prevent these problems from escalating.

Part 1 of 2. Continue reading:

Part 1 [Part 2](#)
Necessary Equipment Procedures