

# Gerbil Health

Because gerbils are prey animals, they are good at hiding sickness or injury in order to not look like an easy target for predators. It is important to check on your gerbils everyday to make sure that they look and act healthy. Below are signs to look for in a healthy and unhealthy gerbil:

Healthy Gerbils	Sick Gerbils
Active and playful	Limping
Clean nose and mouth	Matted fur or hairless patches on tail
Good appetite	Loss of appetite
Clean and dry bottom	Wet or sticky bottom (caused by infection or diarrhea)

- Although parasites are rare in small animals, gerbils can contract fleas, lice, mites, and ringworm from other animals in the home such as dogs or cats.
- Diarrhea in gerbils can be caused by feeding too much wet food in their diets. It is also a sign of infection.
- Make sure that your gerbil's nails aren't growing too long. They can start to curl into their paws which is very uncomfortable for them. You can place stones, lava ledges, wooden hideouts, and shelves in your gerbil's enclosure to help keep their nails filed down when they walk across such surfaces. If you do not feel comfortable trimming your gerbil's nails, you can always bring them to an exotic vet who specializes in working with small animals to have their nails trimmed as well.

If your gerbils are not easy to handle and it is hard for you to get a good look at them, you can safely place them in a clear cup or container to get a better look at them. Just make sure you're not holding the container up too high in case your gerbil is able to climb out of the container.

It is important to get established with an exotic vet when you first get your gerbils and take them in for annual wellness exams to make sure your gerbils are staying healthy.

