

# Goldfish

Goldfish come in more shapes, sizes, colors, and varieties than you can ever imagine. In fact, some look so completely odd that you would think they were captured by aliens and transformed! They will also capture your heart with their beauty and simple care. *Watching goldfish swim gracefully around their home can actually help reduce stress levels and heart rate, a great benefit for such a lovely and low maintenance pet.*

**General Diet:** A general good quality goldfish flake or pellet food is a must for your goldfish's basic diet. The most important thing to remember about feeding fish is that it is very easy to overfeed them, especially goldfish! They put most of their food to growth, yet they act like they are starving. But truthfully, it is very hard to starve any fish. So feed only once a day or even better, every other day, and give only 4 to 6 flakes or pellets for each fish.

**Vitamins/Supplements:** Treats/Extra Foods: Never feed any type of people food! Stick with foods made for goldfish. Different types of special fish foods should be offered at least twice a week instead of the basic diet. Variety is important. These extra foods can include frozen or freeze-dried brine shrimp, bloodworms, and daphnia which is a must for goldfish. It helps keep their digestive tract in good shape.

**Housing:** A fish bowl can still be used with goldfish, but a fish tank is better as it gives more surface area and has more water. At the least, keep only one goldfish per two gallons of water, as they are a bit messy! A cover is not needed, but recommended, as sometimes fish will jump out. A light can be used, and if it should be kept on 8-12 hours a day, during the daytime, and off at night. Fish need to sleep just like we do, but a light is not a necessity with goldfish. One inch of gravel at the bottom will provide enough surface area for the good bacteria that help break down some of the goldfish's waste. A filter is not necessary, but it is highly recommended, as it will help remove both solid and chemical waste and keep the water looking clear. Tap water cannot be used on its own to keep fish, so water conditioner must be added first to remove chemicals like chlorine and heavy metals. It is needed to test and change the pH to neutral, as goldfish are most comfortable in water that is not too high (alkaline) or low (acidic) in pH.

**Sanitation/General Care:** Feed fish every day to every other day. It is best, and much less stressful to the fish, to do small water changes more frequently than large ones once in a while. For bowls or tanks under four gallons, change approximately one cup of water every day, and one half of the water twice to three times a month by putting half of the water and the fish in a bucket and then cleaning the gravel inside the container. For tanks over four gallons, change 20% of the water once a week, and once a month remove one half or so of the tank water by siphoning the water through the gravel with a gravel vacuum. Other option is to stir up gravel once a month creating a "brown snowstorm" in the tank and then siphoning off the waste once it settles. But this is messier than using a gravel vacuum. Cleaning the gravel will keep the good bacteria healthy and take out excess solid wastes.

**General Maintenance:** Filter cartridges that contain charcoal should be changed once a month, as they will not absorb any bad chemicals after this time. Sponge cartridges can be used until they are ratty looking, about 3-4 months, but should be rinsed every month in water that has been dechlorinated first. Good bacteria, besides living on the gravel, also live on the sponge areas of the filter, and chlorine will kill them. Using water just siphoned out of the tank or bowl will work as well for rinsing sponge material. Clean filter and parts such as the impeller at least every 3 months. Algae (which can be green, brown, or red) may grow in the tank or bowl sooner or later. Using an aquarium scraper or sponge will work well to clean the algae off the glass and other surfaces of the bowl or tank.

**Health Care:** Fish will catch diseases whenever they become too stressed. Moving from one tank or bowl to another, not changing water frequently, overfeeding, and adding too many fish at once can be causes of stress. Add fish slowly, and keep only one goldfish per two gallons of water. If you take your time and keep to a simple schedule with feeding and water changes, the chances of diseases showing up in your tank or bowl will diminish.

**Special Section - Choosing a goldfish:** Goldfish no longer are like their name and simply gold. The varieties and colors that can be found in pet stores now will amaze you. Goldfish can have straight or fan tails, be shaped like a torpedo or golf ball, and can come in red, orange, silver, albino, black, bronze, and blue-gray. They can have huge bubbles under their eyes (bubble-eye goldfish), or their eyes may pop out (telescopes), or they may even be looking up (celestial goldfish). There are varieties that have large masses on their heads (Orandas), or fins that are extra long (butterfly or long-finned). The list goes on and on!