

## Safety Concerns With Hamsters Chewing Papier-Mâché

**Is it safe for hamsters to chew papier-mâché?**

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Q: Is papier-mâché made from unprinted newspaper safe for hamsters? I've read it's safe, but I want to make sure.

A: Whether it is safe to let your hamster chew papier-mâché depends on how it is made. In my opinion, it's not a great idea. Here's why:

Papier-mâché is paper and an adhesive, but there are several different recipes for the adhesive. It can be made from boiled flour and water, and that's fairly safe. It can also be made with ingredients that are not safe for animals.

Let's say you're sure that the adhesive is made with flour only. You're still not sure what kind of paper was used — whether it was bleached or had chemicals added to it. Even if you're sure it was made with clean, untreated paper and flour paste, it's still not a great idea to let your hamster put a lot of paper pulp and flour in its stomach.

There's no clear benefit, and several possibilities for problems. I would avoid papier-mâché. The cardboard roll from unscented toilet paper is generally non-toxic, and just as chewy. It's free and always available. Stuff some treats inside it and fill both ends with thin, inexpensive toilet paper. It's a better chew toy all around.