

## How To Treat A Hamster With Wet Tail

### What is the best treatment for a hamster with wet tail?

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**Q:** I bought a Syrian hamster about five days ago and it got wet tail. It's a baby hamster, but I don't know exactly how old it is. I noticed it had a bad odor and a dirty tail, but originally I thought the hamster just got wet or that it peed too much.

Today I noticed my hamster had diarrhea too. I immediately went to the store and bought a wet tail drop treatment. Will this medication work on my hamster? How long will it take for my hamster to heal? Is my hamster's life at risk?

I'm unable to take my hamster to the vet because I cannot afford it. Please help me. Is there any other medication that's better for my hamster?

**A:** The situation you describe is classic for the disease that is called wet tail. Actually, wet tail refers to a hamster with diarrhea, and it may be due to one or more strains of bacteria. It is believed that stress brings on wet tail. The leading cause of the stress in a young hamster is being brought into its new home for the first time. When your hamster gets to your home, let him or her get used to its new environment. Put it quietly in its cage and don't handle it for a day or so. Make sure there is enough water. More importantly, try to give it the food it is used to eating. Don't feed it anything new yet. Keep the room quiet and don't allow any other pets in the room yet. This can be a stressful time for your new pet and reducing its stress decreases the chance of wet tail.

Once your hamster has wet tail, the important steps are to keep your hamster eating and drinking so it remains hydrated. The loss of electrolytes and fluids with the diarrhea are usually the cause of death, not necessarily the bacterial infection that is causing the diarrhea. To best treat wet tail, the hamster requires antibiotics, fluid therapy and increased calorie consumption. Because you cannot visit a veterinarian, concentrate on making sure your hamster is hydrated and getting calories. If your hamster will drink, a fluid like Pedialyte will provide both fluids and electrolyte replacement. That is ideal.

If your hamster won't drink well, put some Pedialyte on a syringe and place a drop or two (no more) in its mouth. I know this seems like very little, and it is, but if you give more at any one time, you could cause the fluid to enter its windpipe (trachea). Give your hamster fluids in this manner frequently, being careful that it swallows what you give. Make sure your hamster is eating. Give it any foods or treats you know it enjoys.