

## Common Gerbil Illnesses

**Watch for these common gerbil illnesses.**

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Photo Courtesy of Eric Phiefer  
Know how to observe and identify signs of illness in pet gerbil.

Pet gerbils are fun-loving animals that are strong and resilient. But like humans, they can get ill. Jeff Werwa, DVM, Cincinnati Medical Center, helps identify some common ailments gerbils can experience.

### Overgrown Teeth

A gerbil's front teeth, the canines and incisors, continuously grow throughout its life. In the wild, gerbils wear down their teeth on foods they eat. As pets, gerbils need chew toys and blocks to help wear teeth down. Sometimes malocclusion (misalignment of teeth) occurs and the gerbil will suffer pain. The teeth can curl into the gerbil's gums causing extreme discomfort. This is easily fixed with a trip to the vet to shave the teeth down. Always check your pet gerbil's teeth and provide it with chew sticks and toys.

### Diarrhea

Diarrhea in a pet gerbil is serious. It can cause dehydration leading to death. Check your gerbil's anal area for paste and wetness. Diarrhea can be caused by your pet gerbil's diet or Tyzzer's, a fatal gerbil illness. When your pet gerbil has diarrhea, call your veterinarian immediately.

### Respiratory Infection

Gerbils are prone to respiratory infection, so you must maintain a clean cage with low humidity levels. Respiratory infection can be fatal and needs to be treated immediately. Your gerbil will exhibit cold-like symptoms, like a runny nose and eyes, sneezing and coughing.

Because pet gerbils won't show signs until the later stages of illness, call your veterinarian as soon as you notice any abnormal behavior. With veterinary assistance, your gerbil will have a better chance of surviving.