

## Hamster Digestion Care

**Take steps to prevent your hamster from getting indigestion.**

*By Audrey Pavia*

You may be shocked one day to notice that your hamster eats its droppings. Far from being disgusting, however, this is a natural part of hamster digestion.

Hamsters have a two-part stomach consisting of a forestomach and a glandular stomach. The bacteria throughout the hamster's digestive system, starting with the esophagus and ending in the colon, help break down the food and release the nutrients, but many nutrients still remain in the droppings after they're eliminated from the body. Thus the hamster eats them again — a habit known as coprophagy — which allows it to extract more of the nutrients the second time around.

Hamsters can get indigestion if they eat too much food too quickly. You may notice that your hamster has the hiccups, which are caused by excess gas in the forestomach. If the hiccups last for more than a day, the hamster is sleeping excessively, or the hamster isn't eating, drinking or eliminating, take it to a veterinarian. An X-ray or ultrasound may be necessary to see if there's anything lodged in the stomach.

To help prevent indigestion don't give a hamster large amounts of food all at once. Hamsters are opportunistic eaters and hoarders. Wait until they've eaten almost all the food they have before adding more to their dish.