

## Hedgehog Out-of-Cage Time

**Before you take your pet out of the cage, take time to hedgehog-proof a room.**

*By Audrey Pavia*

In the wild, hedgehogs get a lot of exercise foraging for food and excavating their burrows. Domesticated hedgehogs need exercise too, and should get most of it during out-of-cage time.

Before you can let your hedgehog run loose, make a room safe for it. Pick a room that you can easily hedgehog-proof, like a bathroom. Get down on all fours and survey the room from your hedgehog's point of view. Plug up any holes or crevices with a towel. Remove electrical, computer and telephone wires so they are out of reach, or cover them with flexible plastic tubing, which you can cut lengthwise (available at hardware stores). Be sure the room is clean and no residue from cleaning products is on surfaces the hedgehog touches.

Remove any houseplants, cleansers or anything else your hedgehog might eat that could cause harm. If you've chosen a bathroom for your hedgehog's exercise room, make sure you close the toilet bowl lid.

Another way your hedgehog can enjoy out-of-cage time is with an exercise ball. Purchase a ball that is 10 inches or so in diameter. While it's inside the ball, your hedgehog can have run of the house as long as you supervise him at all times. Be sure to confine cats and dogs so they don't chase your pet while it's playing.

Whether your small pet is playing in a hedgehog-proofed room or running around the house in an exercise ball, keep a close watch on it to make sure your hedgehog doesn't get into trouble.