

## Common Sugar Glider Ailments

**Know which health issues sugar gliders commonly experience.**

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### Diarrhea

Causes of diarrhea in sugar gliders can be many. Sugar gliders are susceptible to intestinal parasites such as roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms and giardia. They can also get diarrhea from eating too much citrus fruit or from dairy products.

Other potential causes of loose stools are gastroenteritis due to bacterial or viral causes; toxin intake; stress; or aflatoxicosis caused by eating food contaminated by certain fungi.

### Stress-Related Issues

Stress in sugar gliders can manifest as loose stools; self-mutilation of the tail, limbs, scrotum/penis (occasionally related to sexual frustration); coprophagy (feces eating); pacing; hyperphagia (eating too fast) or sometimes hair loss from increased adrenal gland activity caused by stress.

Stress can come from inadequate nutrition, poor cage hygiene, poor cage conditions (the cage is too small, lacks perches/branches, toys and a nest box), a lack of social interaction or a chronic threat from predatory animals such as other pets or wildlife.

### Parasites (Internal/External)

Sugar gliders are susceptible to various internal parasites such as intestinal worms and protozoa, as well as external parasites like fleas, mites and lice. These are more commonly found in wild sugar gliders and those housed outdoors.

### Weight Loss/Gain

Captive sugar gliders do not expend as much energy as their wild counterparts and are prone to being overweight. Diets rich in fats (like nuts/seeds), and too much protein and carbohydrates combined with lack of exercise can make a sugar glider obese. A sugar glider is obese if you can't feel your small pet's ribs beneath a modest padding of flesh.

Sugar gliders that have protruding bones or poor appetites may be ill or are being fed an inadequate diet. If a sugar glider is thin, take it to an exotics veterinarian right away.

Feeding a balanced diet and providing a chance for natural exercise is the best way to prevent obesity. Branches, perches, toys and shelves at various levels in a tall cage best simulate a natural environment for sugar gliders. Plastic, solid-floored hamster wheels can also encourage sugar gliders to exercise.

Sugar gliders can be allowed to roam outside their cages to get more mental stimulation and exercise. This should only be done under supervision and in a secure, sugar glider-proofed room.