



## Ball Python

Ball pythons are popular due to their the small size and docile พน temperament. A fully-grown ball python is around 4-5 feet long and about 10 inches in girth. They are generally nocturnal and spend the daytime hiding, becoming active at dusk.

### General

Ball pythons get their name from their habit of curling tightly into a ball when frightened. Snakes often need several days to become comfortable with strangers and may be nervous at first, but gentle regular handling will help build confidence. To unwrap a python, start with the tail, never the head. Your snake's skin will become tight as it grows and will periodically shed to reveal new skin below. When your snake's eyes turn bluish-white and the old skin appears dull, it is getting ready to shed. Once the eyes have cleared you can help your snake shed cleanly by soaking it in warmish water for 10 minutes.

### Housing

A fully-grown ball python will need a reptile enclosure at least as big as a 30 gal. aquarium. Make sure the enclosure is robust and secure, ball pythons are strong! Provide a range of temperatures between 75-90 deg. F, using an under-tank heating pad, reptile heat tape or preferably, heating lamps. A daytime basking spot of 85-90 deg. F should occupy just one area, so the snake can move to a cooler place if it wishes. The best floor coverings are paper, artificial turf or indoor/outdoor carpet Avoid pine and cedar as they contain harmful oils. Remember to add a place or two for your snake to hide out, such as a half log or box, and provide a large bowl of water for drinking and soaking.

### Diet

For safety, only feed your snake pre-killed prey and remember to thaw frozen prey thoroughly before feeding-time. Never offer prey larger than the diameter of the widest part of your snake. A young ball python should be offered "fuzzy" baby mice every 4-7 days at first, but it should be able to handle adult mice by around 3 months of age. As the snake grows, start to feed rat pups and eventually medium sized rats. An adult will only need feeding once a week and a fully-grown snake about every 11-14 days. Most snakes will become accustomed to eating pre-killed prey, held by the tail with tongs. Failure to eat for extended periods needs to be checked out by a vet. Fresh water should be available at all times. \*

### Cleaning

Remove any feces and wash out the water bowl daily. Washable floor coverings should be soaked weekly in a water/bleach solution, then thoroughly rinsed and dried. For convenience, buy two pieces of floor covering and rotate them.

### Fertility

Ball pythons become sexually mature between 3 to 5 years of age.

### Health

Locate a veterinarian who specializes in treating reptiles and make an appointment promptly if you notice signs of illness including:

failure to eat for over 60 days; listlessness; frequent regurgitation; mucous from the nose or mouth; change in feces or urine; parasites, such as ticks or mites; or wrinkled skin around the neck, indicating dehydration. It's a good idea to have a new snake's feces checked for bacterial and parasitic infections that might be transmitted to humans or other pets.

**Warnings**

Never use "hot rocks" for your snake, as they can cause serious burns.