



Ball Python Care

Background

Length: 4-5 feet long: young will grow about a foot a year during the first three years

Lifespan: 30 years

Cost per year: \$250

Good with kids?: These snakes are naturally curious and gentle creatures, so they're a great reptile for kids

Fun fact: These snakes are called ball pythons because they curl up into a ball when they're nervous

Food

- Allow the snake to acclimate to your home for 2 weeks before feeding
- Feed juvenile snakes once a week and adults once every 2 weeks
- Feed appropriate sized mice or rats no larger than the thickest part of the snake's body
- Feed thawed frozen mice, as live mice can injure the snake
- Feed in a separate tank so it does not associate opening the tank with feeding time
- Provide fresh, clean water at all times in a bowl large enough for the snake to soak in

Housing

- Pick an enclosure specifically designed for snakes, such as a 30 gallon glass tank with a screen top
- Ball pythons are strong escape artists so use snake clips or a heavy item to keep the lid secure
- Provide a hide box large enough for the whole snake's body
- Avoid pine and aspen shavings as a substrate, as they can get lodged in the snake's mouth

Temperature

- Having the perfect temperature is important for a healthy, happy snake!
- Using a thermometer 1" above the enclosure floor, be sure the tank's daytime temperature remains between 80–85°F during the day and at least 75°F at night
- Provide a basking area of 90°F during the day and at least 80°F at night on one side of the tank using a heating pad, light, or ceramic heating element
- Ball pythons are highly susceptible to thermal burns, so do not use a hot rock in the enclosure and make sure the snake cannot touch any light bulbs directly

Humidity

- In the wild, ball pythons are used to dry areas, so there's no need to spray the snake's enclosure daily
- These snakes need a higher humidity (about 65%) when shedding, so you may need to mist daily during a shed

Behavior & Handling

- Ball pythons are nocturnal and prefer to sleep in dark spaces and feel safest in something that is close around them, so don't make their hide box too big!
- Gently handling daily establishes trust between you and the snake
- Wait a few days before handling your new snake so it can get used to the new environment
- Avoid handling during a shed and right after a meal

Daily Care

- Replace any soiled bedding and provide fresh water every day

Signs of Illness

- Irregular sheds or difficulty shedding
- Not eating
- Bumps or spots on skin
- Difficulty breathing
- Vomiting
- White substance in the mouth

Ball Python Supply Checklist

- 30 gallon glass tank with a screen top
- Clips to secure the top down
- Heat lamp
- Heating pad
- Two thermometers
- Humidity gauge
- Choice of substrate
- A hide box or log big enough for the snake's whole body to fit in
- Water bowl
- Frozen mice or rats