

Do's and Don'ts for Young Chinchillas (1 Year or Younger)

NWI Chinchillas

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Young chins are more sensitive to change. The younger the chin, the more sensitive it will be. Because of this, certain things must be done differently when you have a younger chinchilla.

1. **Playtime** – young chinchillas under 6 months of age cannot have playtime. This means, no running loose in a playpen, small bathroom, or any other place. The chinchillas can be taken out of their cage to be held, but cannot run loose.

Why? -- Chinchillas at such a young age cannot regulate their body temperature and they cannot regulate their blood sugar. They run the risk of overheating, and also run the risk of becoming hypoglycemic (low blood sugar), due to over-exertion, which can be fatal.

How Should I Introduce Playtime? Chinchillas can start having playtime at 6 months of age. As with any new thing, playtime should be introduced slowly. Start with 10 minutes per day, and work up to 30 minutes per day by the time the chinchilla is 1 year old.

2. **Treats** – young chinchillas under 6 months of age should not have treats. Treats include things such as cheerios, shredded wheat squares, old fashioned oats, and dried herbs.

Why? – Chinchillas have very small stomachs. When they are young, their stomach size is even smaller, and cannot accommodate much food. If the chinchilla is given treats at a young age, they very well may eat only the treats and get full on the treats, leaving no room for the pelleted food and hay. If they are eating treats (as opposed to pelleted food and hay), they will not be getting the necessary nutrients they need to grow, at the most crucial growth stages of their lives.

How Should I Introduce Treats? Once chinchillas are 6 months old, they can begin having treats. These should be given in moderation, and in accordance with the size of the treat. For example, a chinchilla can have a few cheerios, yet only a single shredded wheat square.

3. **Wheels** – young chinchillas under 6 months cannot have access to wheels.

Why? – Chinchillas at a young age cannot regulate their body temperature or their blood sugar. They run the risk of overheating, and also run the risk of becoming hypoglycemic (low blood sugar), due to over-exertion caused by running too much or too vigorously on their wheel, which can be fatal.

How Should I Introduce A Wheel? Chinchillas can start having access to a wheel when they are 6 months old. Care should be taken to ensure that, when given access to the wheel, the chinchilla does not “go nuts” and run on the wheel so much as to over-exert itself. If the chinchilla really appears to enjoy the wheel and runs on it constantly, the wheel should be taken out and only put in for periodic use, until the chinchilla is older.

Any questions, concerns, or anything else needed, please contact:
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