

# Axolotl

*(Ambystoma Mexicanum)*



<b><u>Adult Size</u></b>	9-12 Inches
<b><u>Life Span</u></b>	10-15 years
<b><u>Male/Female Differences</u></b>	A fully developed male axolotls cloacal area will be swollen. This differs from the female axolotl, which has a rounder body due to eggs inside.
<b><u>Compatibility</u></b>	Like sized axolotls are the only exception to the axolotl tank mate rule. If you put any other fish/shrimp they will eventually end up as food. Axolotls will eat anything that moves - even if it is too large to gulp. Also consider that even small roommates can pick and nip at your axolotl.
<b><u>Origin</u></b>	Was exclusively found wild in the lakes of Xochimilco and Lake Chalco near Mexico City. Axolotls since captivity are one of the most scientifically studied salamanders in the world.
<b><u>Climate</u></b>	Thrives at the bottom of dark and cold lakes - this animal is hardy and intriguing.
<b><u>Day Cycle</u></b>	You will never see your axolotl sleep as they don't have eyelids. When axolotls slow down or retreat to a hiding spot - they are most likely taking a nap. (Polyphasic)
<b><u>Temperature</u></b>	60-65 degrees is ideal. Although temperatures up to the low 70's are tolerated - anything above 74 degrees will heat stress leading to death.
<b><u>Lighting</u></b>	Axolotls do not require lighting and will hide more under intense lighting. Aquarium fixtures should be used if maintaining live plants, but be careful as they can sometimes heat up water temperature.
<b><u>Humidity</u></b>	Axolotls are fully aquatic salamanders. Tap water is appropriate as long as it is treated with dichlorination – IMPORTANT NOTE: Aloe vera is toxic to axolotls, so make sure your dechlorinator is aloe free. No Stress Coat.

<b><u>Habitat/Territory</u></b>	Unfortunately Lake Xochimilco and Chalco no longer exist after being artificially drained to avoid periodic flooding. However you can mimic their habitat by using live plants and bountiful hiding nooks to ensure your axolotl stays emotionally healthy.
<b><u>Substrate/Bedding</u></b>	A fine aquarium safe sand is the only substrate to be considered. Do not attempt to use a gravel aquarium substrate as axolotls are known to try to eat anything, dead or alive. Axolotls will swallow substrate by accident while eating. This can cause impaction and death.
<b><u>Hiding Place/Den</u></b>	Hiding places are an essential aspect of any axolotl habitat. Caves, driftwood, and plants make excellent tank furniture.
<b><u>Cage Type</u></b>	Ten gallon aquariums are acceptable, and twenty gallon aquariums are great! That being said, axolotls are messy eaters and providing the largest tank possible will reduce tank maintenance frequency. A filter should be used, but only to the level of a gentle current. Too much moving water can cause axolotls to become stressed and sick. Oxygenators are perhaps the most important piece of your tank setup. Having oxygen rich water is essential to keeping a happy healthy axolotl.
<b><u>Diet</u></b>	Carnivorous, axolotls will devour any protein put in the tank.
<b><u>Supplements</u></b>	The addition of supplements to an already diverse diet is unneeded and may hurt your axolotl.
<b><u>Diet Precautions</u></b>	Many axolotl owners warn of using live fish as feeders. Even small fish can potentially nip at an axolotl's frills or feet. If you have success with a passive feeder you may continue with cautious observation. More importantly feeder fish can potentially pass diseases along to your pet. Too large a food and choking/impaction can occur. Feed every 2-3 days. Feeding too frequently will end up in uneaten food rotting at the bottom of your tank harming your water quality.
<b><u>Feeding</u></b>	Earthworms, insects, freeze dried and frozen foods, small fish and shrimp; these are the makings of a complete axolotl diet. Never put any food in the tank the axolotl cannot fit inside their mouth. Axolotls generally swallow their food whole. Axolotls eat large clumps of food and slowly digest.
<b><u>Grooming</u></b>	Axolotls shed their skin underwater, and then eat it!
<b><u>Oral and Foot Care</u></b>	Smaller fish can nip the frills and toes of axolotls, be careful if adding tank mates. Too large of fish or gravel can get stuck in an axolotl mouth or cause impaction.

**Proper Handling**

Axolotls should be treated as a fish and are never to be handled.

**Habitat Maintenance**

Your axolotl tank should be maintained the same as a fish tank. Dechlorination on tap water is necessary, and regular water changes/filter maintenance are a must. Aloe vera, like that found in Stress Coat, is toxic to axolotls, so make sure your dechlorinator does not contain it. Refer to our fish tank care sheets for more information on how to establish good water quality by maintain a nitrogen cycle.