

soft coral

care sheet



Soft corals are fleshy with no hard skeletal structure. They tend to be hardier than hard corals and grow rapidly.

facts

average adult size:	depends on species, feeding habits and age
average life span:	depends on species
diet:	photosynthetic and/or filter feeders
minimum aquarium size:	29+ gallons, depending on species
water temperature:	72 to 78°F
specific gravity:	1.023 to 1.025



Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, refer to the Sources section or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

soft coral

includes leather corals, mushrooms, zoanthids, star polyps and xenia

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diet

A well-balanced soft coral diet consists of:

- Some soft corals are filter feeders and must have an ample supply of small suspended particles and nutrients in the water.
- Some corals contain photosynthetic algae in their bodies called “zooxanthellae,” which help meet most of their nutritional needs.
- Liquid or powdered coral diet.

feeding

Things to remember when feeding your soft coral:

- Feed once or twice weekly, depending on species.
- Calcium and trace mineral supplements may also be given.

housing

- Keep in an appropriately sized aquarium; full spectrum, high-intensity lighting and proper filtration are essential.
- Use of copper-based medications is toxic to soft coral.
- Some corals require strong lighting combined with moderate to strong, but intermittent, water movement within the tank.
- Live rock can provide a stable location for the coral to attach to while also enhancing biological filtration.
- **Stable water quality and parameters are critical to the health of aquatic life. If you are unsure of your water quality, Petco provides free water testing.**

normal behavior

- Some soft corals require increased lighting, filtration and water flow.

habitat maintenance

- **Daily:** Check filter, water temperature, specific gravity and other equipment.
- **Weekly:** Check water quality at least once a week.
- **Monthly:** Change 10 to 25% of the total volume of water every 2 to 4 weeks, or as needed.

Introduce new inhabitants to the aquarium gradually.

compatibility

- Soft corals can secrete a defense chemical that inhibits the growth of nearby corals, and they should not be placed close to other sessile (attached to the base) invertebrates. Some aquatic life may feed on coral polyps. Check Petco's Marine Compatibility Care Sheet for more information regarding your specific species.

signs of a healthy soft coral

- Smooth body
- Fully open polyps
- Free of pests
- **Avoid overcrowded conditions, which are a major cause of stress and disease. Maintain good water quality with regular water changes and adequate filtration.**

red flags

- Loss of color
- Tissue erosion
- Polyps are closed
- Limp, slumped stalk

common health issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Body or surface erosion	Poor water quality; nutrient deficiency.	Test and treat water immediately; maintain proper diet.

If you notice any of these signs, test water quality and improve as necessary.

shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized aquarium
- Appropriate food, dry and frozen
- Décor
- Water conditioner
- Marine aquarium salt
- Filter
- Water test kit
- Full spectrum lighting
- Net
- Thermometer
- Protein skimmer (recommended)
- Marine substrate
- Heater
- Hydrometer
- Book about soft corals

sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on soft corals and the variety of private brand products available for the care and happiness of your new pet. All private brand products carry a 100% money-back guarantee.

Because all aquatic life are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as *Atypical Mycobacterium* and *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your aquatic life or habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

Pregnant women, children under the age of 5, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing or caring for aquatic life and should consider not having aquatic life as a pet.

Go to cdc.gov/healthypets and petco.com/caresheet for more information about aquatic life and disease.

This Care Sheet can cover the needs of other species. Go to petco.com for more information.

