

HEALTHY BEAK TIPS

A healthy bird has a healthy beak.

A healthy beak means that your bird will be using it to eat, climb, play, and chew. If your bird's beak is causing him discomfort in some way, he will avoid using it.



Signs that your bird's beak is healthy include:

- Smooth, symmetrical appearance
- No peeling, cracks or unusual textures
- No discolored areas
- Proper beak length
- Proper alignment of the upper beak and lower beak

A pet bird's beak normally grows 1" to 3" each year, depending on the size and species of the bird. This growth is usually not noticed as the beak wears down from use at the same rate. When the beak grows faster than it is worn down, beak overgrowth occurs, which can cause difficulty eating, playing and climbing.

Keep your bird's beak in good shape:

- Offer a variety of chew toys. Provide at least two destructible toys in its cage, rotating out to keep your bird interested and replace when worn.
- Include different textures of perches, including cement perches specifically made for beak and nail health. Wood perches should be made of a wood soft enough that the bird can gnaw on, rather than plastic or manzanita.
- Feed your bird hard treats and pellets to help wear down the beak while it eats. Extruded diets tend to be harder than pressure-pelleted diets, and most seeds are too soft for this purpose. A limited number of nuts, in the shell, will help a large parrot's beak stay at its proper length.
- House your bird in a proper size cage. Owners of large parrots, especially, need to provide a sturdy cage to prevent unwanted damage and injury.

If you notice your bird's beak is too long, uneven, or otherwise abnormal, contact your avian veterinarian to determine the reason for the problem as well as to trim and correct it. Beak trimming can be stressful for a bird. After a trim, take the bird directly home, and place it in a quiet, familiar spot in your home. Reassure your pet, but avoid excessive cuddling. Most birds prefer to be left alone for a while after enduring a trip to the vet. Provide fresh water and plenty of tasty foods, and do not allow visitors or other family members to disturb him until the next day.