



# ASSOCIATION OF SUGAR GLIDER VETERINARIANS™

## **Drinking, Dehydration & Toxicity Poisoning**

Hi, my name is Dr. David Brust, and I've been a practicing exotic veterinarian for the last 25 years. I'm the author of "*Sugar Gliders: A Complete Veterinary Care Guide*" – and I'm also the president of the Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians.

The purpose of this video series is to cut through all the internet misinformation out there, and teach owners like you the best - veterinary-approved - ways to raise and care for sugar gliders.

Now, just to make sure we're all on the same page here, sugar gliders are also commonly known as "sugar bears" and "honey gliders" – and with that in mind, the goal of this video is to discuss the best ways to make sure your little guys are drinking enough.

As a practicing Vet, I can tell you that two of the most common reasons why a sugar glider can die are because of accidental dehydration or toxicity poisoning from city tap water. Luckily, both these problems are easy to avoid just by taking a couple simple steps. ☺

First off, even though sugar gliders tend to get a significant amount of their fluids from eating fresh fruits like apples, they should always have at least one other source of drinking water in their cage at all times. Usually, the best way to do this is with a common "drip" water bottle like this that hangs on the side of their cage – and has a little ball in the end that releases liquid whenever they touch it.

Even though these bottles tend to work very well, when you first bring your new babies home, I always suggest putting a small, shallow "water bowl" of some kind in their cage as well. This is simply because your baby may – or may not – already be used to drinking out of a bottle; and especially during the first couple days you have them – (when they are all nervous and scared) - you need to be very sure that they are drinking enough fluids.

The best containers for this are something like either a small bottle cap – or even a weighted ashtray. You just want something that is shallow - not too big - and can't be tipped over easily.

As far as where to put these things in the cage, just hang the water bottle on the side so the animal can easily get to the tip – and put the water "bowl" inside a plastic "dining room" like this where it will stay clean. Again, by using two water sources like this (just in the beginning), you can be sure your baby is getting enough liquid at the same time you are teaching it to drink out of its bottle. ☺

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Now, teaching a baby to drink out of its bottle is usually a very quick and simple process. Basically, every time you put the baby back in its cage, just bump its nose gently up against the end of the tube so it gets a little liquid on its nose. Sugar gliders are extremely smart little animals, so they usually pick this up after just a time or two. However, if you want to be extra careful, you can even dab a little bit of blueberry yogurt or applesauce on the tip of the tube before you bump them up against it. This way they'll definitely remember where their bottle is. ☺

Now let's talk about what to put in their bottle...

Sugar gliders love almost anything that tastes sweet, so for the first few weeks, mix their water 50/50 with either Gatorade or Pedialyte. You may have to play with a few different flavors to find something they like but usually any kind of citrus type of flavor works well. The idea here is not only to encourage them by making the water sweet – but the Pedialyte or Gatorade also helps make sure they stay completely hydrated. It basically does the same thing for them that it does for us. ☺

Now, if your baby happens to be very finicky – and doesn't like Pedialyte or Gatorade - you can also mix their water 50/50 with apple juice for a few days. Either way, you just want to make sure to keep an eye on the water level – and change out the water once a day to keep it fresh. Once you are sure they are drinking steadily, you can slowly reduce the Gatorade or juice until they are drinking just straight water.

Ok, now let's talk about the single most important topic on this video - and that's what kind of water you should use. Probably one of the most common causes of death in sugar gliders is toxicity poisoning – and the most common source of this is everyday tap water. This is because most metropolitan water sources frequently experience “spikes” in chlorine, fluoride and other chemicals that are added to the water. These spikes don't affect us – or even larger pets – most of the time, but to a tiny baby bird or sugar glider that only weighs a few ounces, they can be deadly.

Because of this, the best water to give your gliders is always some sort of bottled or drinking water. Usually, spring water or drinking water are just fine – and since a gallon can last a long time with these little guys, it's not very expensive. If your home has a water filtration system in it, that can also work, but just make sure to change the filters regularly.

Well, that's about it for this video. It's amazing how quickly we get attached to these little guys –and vice versa – and it's devastating when something happens to them. Therefore, especially when it comes to their drinking water, it's always better to be safe, than sorry! ☺

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