

## GIVE A BABY BIRD THE BEST CHANCE OF SURVIVAL

If the bird has all its feathers and can flutter fly it may be a fledgling. Do not “rescue” fledglings immediately. Fledglings have left the nest but need a few days to get strength and experience. The parent birds will come to the ground to feed the fledgling.

Keep your cat and dog indoors for a few days. Watch from a hidden spot to see if the adults come to feed the fledgling.

### **Call for help if you are unsure:**

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**If you do rescue a baby bird —**

**WARM and SETTLE THE BABY – *A cold baby bird will die!***

Punch air holes into a box or plastic container. Put the baby into the container on layers of tissue paper. Cover the baby bird with a piece of tissue or very soft cloth like T-shirt material.

Warm the baby immediately. Put the container into a second box with a hot water bottle or a heating pad or an infrared light. Keep the box closed so that the temperature is warm all around the baby.

Keep the temperature at 32°C to 35°C for newly hatched babies. Drop to around 30°C at about 10 days old. By the time the bird is half feathered the temperature can go down to 26°C to 28°C. The temperature must be constant throughout the day and night. As the baby grows feathers give it an opportunity to move away from the heat.

Humidity is necessary. Keep a small damp sponge or cloth in the box away from the baby bird.

**TAKE CARE:** Incandescent bulbs get very hot and they can set paper or cloth on fire. Beware of too much heat directly under the baby. **Note that energy saving globes do not get warm.**

**FEED the BABY — *A cold bird cannot eat!***

Birds can be roughly separated into fruit eaters, seed eaters, insect eaters and meat eaters. Without knowing the species or at least recognizing the group type it is difficult to know what to feed.

Birds especially baby birds have a very fast metabolism and need to eat often. Depending on the size, age and condition of the nestling feed diurnal birds every half to two hours, throughout the daylight hours. Warm the food to 30°C to 35°C. Above 35°C can damage the bird and below 30 makes metabolism difficult and can result in problems such as “sour-crop”. Baby birds can eat up to 50% of their body weight.

Many baby birds found in gardens are seed and or fruit eaters. A mixture of a baby cereal with an added commercial egg food or a commercial rearing mix can be used. A small amount of mashed banana or human baby’s fruit puree or a good quality applesauce can be added.

Insect eaters that catch insects in the air need a diet made up of fatless (topside) minced meat mixed with a soya-based porridge. Make a 3:1 mix. Add a multivitamin /mineral/trace element mix.

Some insect-eaters can be fed good quality cat food pellets mixed with water and ground down finely. Cat pellets soaked in water can also be hand-fed whole to older nestlings.

Mealworms are an essential weaning food for many insectivores.

Birds of prey will very early need appropriate food such as rodents if they are to be successfully raised and released.

**Take Care:** Do not use food with flavourants, preservatives or added sugar. Do not feed cold food. Do not feed old or spoilt food.

The weight of a baby bird is an excellent indication of how well the bird is doing. Weigh the baby every few days if you have a scale that can correctly weigh grams.

## HOW TO FEED BABY BIRDS

Most birds have a crop that is part of the esophagus that fills up with food before the food passes in to the stomach. A full crop feels like a soft balloon. Check the crop after each feed. Crops should empty completely at least once in 24 hours and this will be overnight.

Open the beak – you will see the tongue of the bird has a little vent in the middle and if you look up at the palate, you will often see a similar vent for air from the nasal passages. Avoid putting food directly on these vents as the bird may choke. Put syringed food deeper into the throat.

A syringe or a dropper is good for soft pureed food. A small scoop can be used for more solid foods. Feed small amounts feed slowly allow the baby to swallow and feed until the crop is full (as a soft balloon).

**Take care:** Do not “feed” water. Put the food deep into the mouth past the breathing vents in the tongue and in the top palate. Do not stretch the crop by over-feeding.

## HYGIENE

Always wash your hands and rinse off the soap before preparing food or touching the baby bird. Wash the feeding equipment after every feed. Use hot water. Beware of soap, rinse everything well. Clean out dirty paper whenever you see it.

## VOICE AND CONTACT

Contact call the baby before and during feeding and even when not feeding.

**Keep clear records of all events**



Prepared by

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