

Converting your Bird to a Healthy Diet

A healthy diet will improve your bird's well-being

All-seed diets are deficient in fat-soluble vitamins like vitamin A, minerals such as calcium, and the correct balance of amino acids. Over time, seed diets lead to malnutrition and weakening of the immune system. A weakened immune system can predispose your bird to life-threatening illness.

Before beginning a dietary conversion, your bird should be evaluated by your avian veterinarian to ensure he is healthy and of a normal weight and body condition. It will also be important for you to monitor your bird's weight and droppings closely during the dietary transition period.

Dietary conversion requires patience and persistence

Gradually increase the proportion of healthy food offered. Dietary conversion can take months and involves the waste of some food, but is well worth the effort. This change will impact your bird's health forever!



Offer new foods when the bird is hungriest

What is your pet's favorite meal? If he is he hungriest in the morning, then that is a great time to offer healthy new foods.

Good transitional foods

Produce that is relatively sweet like corn, grapes, and apples are not particularly rich in nutrients, but often make a fantastic transitional food. Once your "seed junky" is eating some produce, gradually offer more nutritious foods such as dark leafy greens as well as orange vegetables like yam (sweet potato) and carrots.

The grains and hulled seeds present in foraging diets like Lafeber Nutri-Berries™, Avi-Cakes™, and Nutri-Meals™ often help promote conversion to a wholesome diet.



Variety is the spice of life

Provide a variety of food colors, shapes, and textures to attract your bird to new food items.* For instance, sweet potato may be fed raw or cooked as mashed, diced, sliced or pureed foods.

Providing choices may also be helpful when offering formulated foods such as pellets or extruded diets. Present several quality brands including Lafeber's Premium Daily Diet Pellets™ or Pellet-Berries™.

**Caution:* A wide variety of foods given to an adult bird may signal the onset of breeding season and promote reproductive activity. By the same token, soft, warm foods may mimic regurgitation of foods, a reproductive behavior associated with pair bonding.

Conversion can be exciting and fun

Parrots enjoy drama and are naturally curious. Be enthusiastic as you pick up a new food item. Savor it (or at least pretend to), and then quickly offer some to your bird. As a social eater, he may be more likely to accept the food item.

Parrots are also playful. Make food fun by winding greens through the bars, or creating kabobs. Many parrots also enjoy "leaf bathing" with large, wet leaves of greens on the top of the cage. Leaf bathing may lead to leaf eating.

Little Parrots vs Big Parrots

Ground-feeding birds, such as cockatiels and budgerigars, prefer to eat on flat surfaces. Sprinkle a formulated diet like crumbled 'Berries or pellets onto the table mixed with seed. Look intently at the food, and start "pecking" at it like a bird would by picking up individual pieces quickly with your thumb and forefinger. Later, place food on plastic lids on the bottom of the cage to maintain interest in these items.

Small parrots will sometimes peck at large chunks of produce or Avi-Cakes fastened to the bars of the cage.

Large parrots may also be fed meals twice daily instead of offered food free choice. This practice may make these individuals hungry enough to better accept new foods. NEVER withhold food from small or medium-sized birds.