

# Ich

---

## **What causes Ich?**

Ich is considered the common cold of fish. Just like germs that make humans sick, parasites are always present to attack fish. In a healthy situation a fish's normal immune system will protect it against these attacks.

When your fish becomes "stressed" its immune system breaks down and the ich parasite is able to make your fish sick. Just about every fish has been exposed to the parasite at one time or another and may be a carrier. There are 3 common causes of "stress" for your fish:

- 1) General water quality, ammonia in particular. High ammonia level is the #1 cause of "stress", ich and death.
- 2) Temperature drop of more than 3° as in transporting the fish. Keeping fish too cold (below 75°) will increase the chances of ich.
- 3) Fighting between fish, especially new fish and old fish will increase the chances of ich.

## **What are the symptoms of Ich?**

Ich appears as tiny white spots on the body, fins or gills. These white spots usually look like grains of salt. Ich does not kill quickly. Fish are usually infected for 5-7 days before they will start to die.

## **Why do new fish get Ich more often?**

People usually want to blame the new fish, or say a new fish was ill. In most cases a new fish will get Ich first because the water in its new home is different than what it was used to and they have just been through the stress of being transported. The older fish in the tank have a chance to "acclimate" to the water as it slowly changes. If your water quality were deteriorating each day, after a week it would be too poor for the fish to remain healthy. Established fish may not notice this because it was a gradual change. For new fish they could be experiencing a drastic change in water chemistry in just a few hours. It then spreads to the other fish.

## How do I treat Ich?

To treat Ich effectively you must first get rid of the stress that caused Ich. Always assume it's the water quality until we can rule that out. The best method is to have your water tested to determine its condition. We will test your water in our store or you can purchase a test kit for your home. Never use a cheap test kit since you will not get accurate results. If you cannot get your water tested within 24 hours do a 1/3 water change just to be safe. After we correct the environment we can safely medicate the water.

- 1) It is best to raise the temperature to 80-84 degrees. This will make the Ich parasite grow quicker which will make it more sensitive to medication.
- 2) Begin treatment with a proven Ich medication. We recommend "Quick Cure".
- 3) Remove the carbon from your filter. Carbon will absorb some of the medication so it is best to run your filter without carbon during this time.
- 4) Treat until you have not seen any spots on the fish for 48 hours. Do a ½ water change after medicating. Put fresh carbon back in the filter. Monitor your fish for 1 week. If the spots do not reappear it is safe to add fish again.

### Hints:

- 1) Follow the instructions on your medication carefully. Scaleless fish, tetras and other characins may need a lower dosage.
- 2) If your fish are very lethargic or breathing heavily, do a 1/3 water change and have us test the water immediately.
- 3) Some fish are more susceptible to ich such as neons and other tetras, clown loaches and oscars. Fortunately studies have shown that fish can develop immunity to ich after having had it and survived.
- 4) Ich takes 5-7 days to kill your fish. It is easy to cure if you identify it and treat it quickly.

This information is brought to you by the Pet Professionals at:

**The Pet Advantage**  
**350 Dorset St.**  
**So. Burlington, Vermont**  
**860-1714**