



Understanding White Spot

Why do some fish get white spot and others don't?

Just like humans, fish have immune systems. If their immune system is weakened through low quality foods, lack of vitamins or stress, they are more susceptible.

Where does white spot come from?

That is like asking where does the common cold come from. Most people like to blame their aquarium but the truth is, fish can carry white spot and present with it under stress. It can come from the breeder, the importer, the quarantine area, the supplier, the aquarium, or lying dormant in your own tank.

What is the Life Cycle of White Spot?

1. Parasites invade the skin and grow within it.
2. Parasites digest the fish tissue (causing irritation) and eventually grow to adult size (about the same as a pin head).
3. Adult parasites leave the fish to reproduce at the bottom of the aquarium.
4. There they undergo a rapid division of up to 1000 youngsters.
5. Young free swimming parasites (called Tomites) burst from the cyst after 12 to 18 hours. This is when the medication works.
6. The complete cycle at tropical temperatures takes 3 to 5 days.

How can I prevent white spot?

White spot is as common and as aggravating as the common cold is to us. The best you can do is follow some strict practices:

Reduce stress wherever you can.

When purchasing a new fish – check that no other fish in the tank are presenting with white spot.

Carry the new fish home in a dark bag or box, keep the temperature steady. You can do this by transporting your fish in a Styrofoam box. Your aquarium can provide one or you can take your own to the aquarium.

Before putting the fish into the tank - treat the tank with Aquasonic's Bactonex and Protech – one will help the spread of any diseases and the other will ensure the fish are less stressed.

Whenever introducing a new fish into the tank, float correctly (refer to our notes on this) and then put into a breeder net. Turn off any lights and leave the tank alone for a couple of hours or overnight.

Before releasing the fish in with the tank mates make sure there are plenty of plants and hiding spots, and move a couple of things around. Whilst the other fish are busy finding new spots to hang out, the new fish can find a home.

Remove any aggressive fish. If you have an aggressive tank mate, your fish will always be stressed and therefore more prone to disease.

Always keep white spot treatment handy so you can react quickly and follow the directions exactly. Read "Treating White Spot" which you can find on our website. Do this before you do anything else.

Purchase a quarantine tank – all you need is a tank and a gentle filter that also aerates the water. Some people recommend not using a filter – just a pump and air stone. This is because a filter can strip some of the medication. I believe a toxic tank is more risky and by keeping your sick fish in good quality water you will increase the chances of survival. By separating the infected fish from the others – you can prevent it from spreading.

Always feed a variety of foods including plants, dry, frozen, live and use Seachems garlic guard mixed with their food everyday. Garlic guard is long lasting and works as an antibiotic and antifungal preventative and helps to build the immune system whilst warding off parasites like white spot. It will also help fussy or sick fish to eat.

Install a UV steriliser. This is a must for all responsible fish keepers and it kills unwanted bacteria and organisms in the water.

Maintain your water quality and keep the parameters the same. A drop in pH from 7.0 to 6.5 means your fish are exposed to water that is 10 times more acidic than they are used too. A drop to 6.0 means they are exposed to water 100 times more acidic.

Ammonia and nitrite spikes are toxic – if the fish survive they can be stressed so therefore susceptible to disease – avoid these by doing regular small water changes, using a good quality filter that can handle the capacity of fish and water and ensuring that you don't overfeed or use cheap foods. Test regularly.

Extended exposure to high nitrates can cause stress. Have your water tested regularly and follow good tank maintenance practices.

Not using a good quality aeger that removes chlorine, chloramines and repairs their slime coat, can cause stress.

If you follow good fish keeping practices you will find that you will not suffer the misfortune of white spot on a regular basis. If you do spot it, react quickly and you may not lose any fish.