

## 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. There are 3 common causes of "stress" for your fish.

1. Ammonia. High ammonia levels is the #1 cause of "stress", Ich and death.
2. Temperature change 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?** Tiny white dots that can appear on the body, fins or gills. These white dots 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. The older fish in the tank have a chance to "acclimate" to the water as it slowly changes. If your ammonia goes up 0.2 PPM per day, after a week it would be much too high. Older fish may not notice this because it was a gradual change. For new fish they could be going from a low level of ammonia in the store to a high level in your tank in one day.

### How do I treat Ich?

1. To treat Ich effectively you must first get rid of the stress that caused Ich. Always assume its ammonia until we can rule that out. The best method is to have your ammonia tested to determine its level. We will test your ammonia in our store or you can purchase an ammonia test kit for your home. Never use a cheap ammonia test kit since you will not get accurate results. If you cannot get your ammonia 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.
2. 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.
3. Begin treatment with a proven Ich medication.
4. 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.
5. Treat until you have not seen any dots on the fish for 48 hours. Do a ½ water change after medicating. Put your carbon back in the filter. Monitor your fish for 1week. If the dots do not reappear it is safe to add fish again.

### Hints:

- Follow instructions on your medication about a water change after medication. Typically you do a 1/3 water change at least every 3-day while medicating.
- If your fish are very lethargic or breathing heavily, do a 1/3 water change and have us test your water immediately.
- Certain fish are more susceptible to Ich: Neons, Head 'n Tail lite Tetra's, Spotted Pimodella, Clown Loaches, Oscars ...etc.
- Ich takes 5-7 days to kill your fish. It is easy to cure if you look it out for, find the cause and treat it.
- Blaming the new fish is not constructive!