

Is My Cockatiel Chick Being Overfed?

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Q. I have a pair of cockatiels who laid eight eggs. The first one was smaller than a finch egg, of the seven normal eggs, only one made it. It is a very cute chick, but we are worried that the parents are overfeeding the baby. We check the nest box and baby on a daily basis and everything seems fine. The parents are very protective over the baby but let us check on them. The baby's crop is so huge it seems it will explode any minute, yet the baby seems to be doing fine, except it can't really move well because of the crop. This is the first baby they have though and we are concerned, any suggestions?

Linda S. Rubin explains:

Congratulations on your baby cockatiel! Everything appears to be going well and the fact that there is only one chick explains why the parents are a bit over-protective and stuffing the chick! As long as the parents are not "wet feeders," meaning they are not overfeeding wet material down the crop that is sticking to, or spilling out of the mouth, which would be dangerous - then there is little reason to be concerned.

Wet feeders usually require a change in soft foods provided, sometimes more experience with raising young, or possibly a health check for medical issues. Always serve soft food that is fresh, and changed and replenished several times a day to prevent bacteria buildup. As long as the chick's crop is not filled above the "Adam's apple," and the chick is not regurgitating food or showing signs of aspirating material, then it is doubtful that anything abnormal is happening. You are probably the envy of other cockatiel breeders whose birds may not feed the young well enough, or that may not feed at all, especially for first-time experiences.

As long as you are feeding a well-balanced diet, and follow your avian veterinarian's advice, sit back, relax and enjoy your birds. You may wish to check out the Cockatiel Foundation's website at www.CockatielFoundation.com to be certain you are providing everything the parents need.