

A close-up photograph of a young koala clinging to a light-colored tree branch. The koala has thick, greyish-brown fur and large, rounded ears. It is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a forest environment.

The Cute and Cuddly Koalas

By Kahani Goyal

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Introduction

I watched many videos about koala bears and thought they were very cute and cuddly animals. So I did some research on them, and here are some interesting things I found.

Marsupials and Koala Bears

Marsupials are a branch of mammals. Marsupials stay pregnant for a very short time and have a pouch. Koala bears stay pregnant for 30-35 days.



Photo by [David Clode](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The new born koala bear is called a joey. It weighs half a gram. When born, a joey crawls into its mama's pouch and feeds on milk.

At the age of 6 months, he/she starts eating excreted pulpy eucalyptus leaves called pap prepared by their mother. The joey at age of 7 months emerges from the pouch and rides on its mothers back.

At the age of 1 year, the joey is kicked out of the tree by its mother to live independently on its own tree. At this age, the koala bear has learned to climb trees and eat leaves. Soon these koala bears will become pregnant and repeat the process.

If the joey is a female, it sexually matures at the age of three. If the joey is a male, it sexually matures at the age of four.

Why Are koala bears Stuck to Gum Trees?

Koala bears eat eucalyptus leaves. Since eucalyptus leaves are poisonous to most animals, koala bears have it all to themselves.



Photo by [Madeleine Maguire](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The koala bears have big digestive systems, to be able to digest the toxins in the leaves, but even then, the digestive process is tiring, so they sleep for at least 18-22 hours a day. They eat 500 grams of eucalyptus leaves every day.

Since koala bears get water from eucalyptus leaves, they do not drink any water, but the leaves they eat have to be greenish, not reddish.

Koala bears have strong arms, powerful legs, and sharp claws. They sleep cuddling a eucalyptus tree. The eucalyptus tree is also called the gum tree.

Threats to Koala Bears



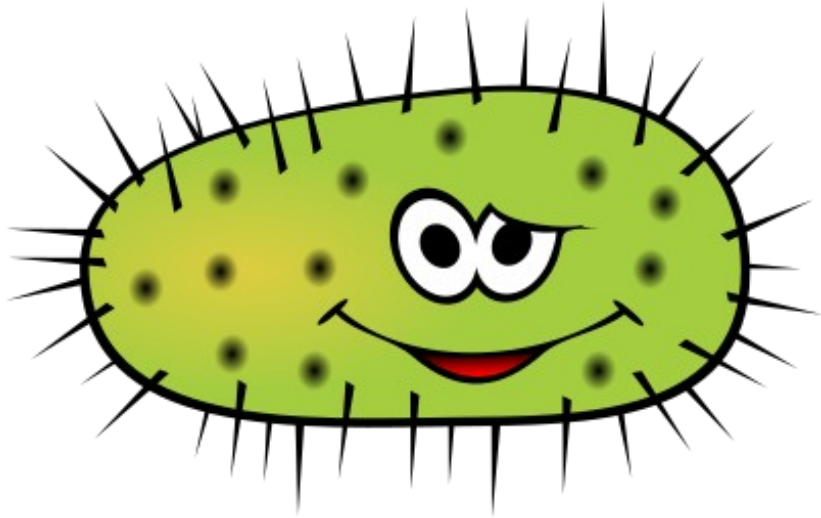
Picture from [wikipedia](#)

Koala bears get injured or killed in many ways.

1. Koala bears need eucalyptus trees for their survival, but when we humans cut down large chunks of forests, the koala bears lose their home.
2. Dogs are koala bear predators.

3. Usually, koala bears and green ants co-exist without a problem, because the koala bears live at the top, and the green ants live at the bottom, of the eucalyptus trees. But during droughts and breeding seasons, the koala bears come down the trees and the green ants leave formic acid in the koala bear's eyes, which makes them blind. But this can be cured.
4. When the koala bears come to the roads, because they are blind or have lost their homes, some of them may be killed in traffic accidents.
5. Koala bears die in forest fires.

Chlamydia Disease



Koala bears get chlamydia from a bacteria called *chlamydia pneumonia*. Adult koala bears can catch chlamydia from sexual transmission, whereas the baby koala bears catch chlamydia from infected pap.

Chlamydia causes the koala bears, painful eye infections, blindness, bladder infections and infertility.

Chlamydia can be treated with antibiotics. But that upsets the koala bear's unique gut bacteria, which they need to help them digest the toxins in the eucalyptus leaves.

Lucky for the koala bears, people are testing a new vaccine for chlamydia. So far, tests show that if it works, it will prevent koala bears from getting chlamydia, and even if the koala bear already has got chlamydia, the vaccine will reduce the severity of the disease.

Koala Bear Conservation

Because of the various threats to koalas, many of who are infected with chlamydia, it is important that we humans who have destroyed their forests, care for them to help their species survive.

The Bee family in Queensland is famous for their koala hospital. Sick, lost or injured koala bears are brought to the koala bear hospital called *The Magnetic Island Koala Hospital* owned by Alison Bee and Tim Bee. They along with their daughter Izzy, help the sick or injured koalas and nurse them back to health.

Izzy's family carefully examine the koala's injuries and infections. Izzy feeds the koalas eucalyptus leaves and manmade powder milk mixed with water. The powder milk includes the nutrients present in the milk produced by koala moms.

Izzy rides her bike all over Magnetic Island in Queensland, searching for large fallen eucalyptus trunks and branches and takes them to the hospital for the koalas to live on. She gets fresh leaf for the koalas every day. There are three types of leaves koalas can eat, so when a new koala comes in, Izzy tries all three types of leaves to figure out their favorite.

Alison Bee is a veterinarian and treats the koalas everyday. Each koala lives in a cage at the hospital with a fellow koala, so they can make friends.

At the hospital, the koalas grow to more than nine whole pounds. Then the koalas are released into a tree selected by Izzy full of their favorite eucalyptus leaves.

If you want to know more about the way they do it, watch their show on Netflix called “Izzy’s Koala World”.

List of links used for reference material

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<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/>

<https://www.livescience.com/>

<https://www.savethekoala.com/>

<https://australian.museum/>

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