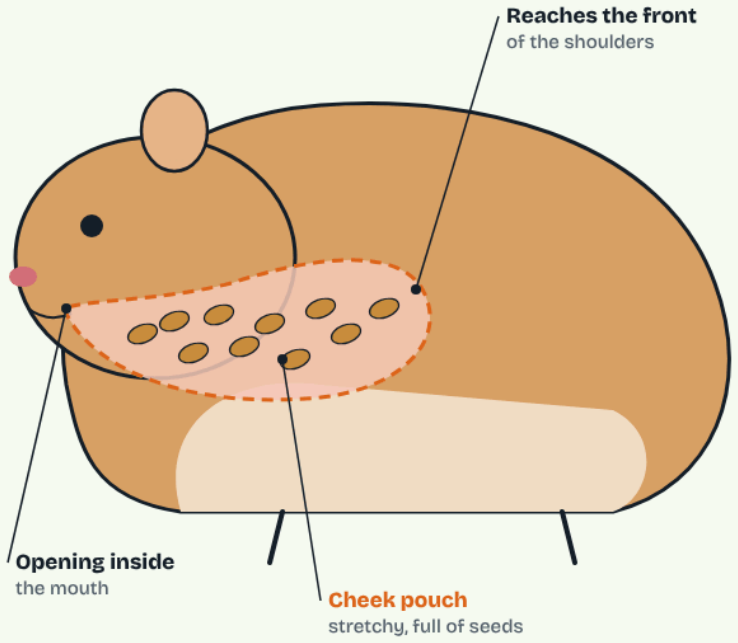
That is why

How do hamster cheek pouches work?

Two stretchy, dry pockets run from the mouth to the shoulders, so a hamster can carry food home without swallowing it.

A Where the pouches are



Each side has its own pouch. Food goes in, not down the throat.

B Fill, carry, empty

1 Fill

Food is pushed into the pouches, not chewed or swallowed.

2 Carry

The tough, skin-like lining keeps seeds dry and whole on the trip home.

3 Empty

Back in the burrow, front paws push the food out into a larder.

When full, the pouches can make the head look two to three times bigger.

C More than a shopping bag

1 Food stores

Wild hamsters carry seeds to underground larders to last through lean times.

2 Moving babies

Mothers of some species hide their young in the pouches when in danger.

3 Floats

Some species fill their pouches with air to help them float while swimming.

Also found in: chipmunks, gophers, many monkeys and the platypus.

A hamster carries its shopping in its cheeks, not its stomach.

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