

Poison Dart Frog Model

The poison dart frog doesn't actually fire poisonous darts! Native people used the frog to make poisonous blowpipe darts. That's how it got its name. Poison dart frogs are quite small. Some can be as small as one inch long. They live in Central and South America in tropical forests. They eat ants and mites. Poison dart frogs have special physical and behavioral adaptations that help them to survive.

There are a couple of physical adaptations that keep the poison dart frog safe. First, it has toxic skin. This means its skin is poisonous. The poison on its skin can paralyze or kill predators that touch it. The poisonous chemicals come from the food it eats, such as ants and mites, which contain toxins. Another physical feature of poison dart frogs is their brightly colored skin. Different kinds of poison dart frogs are different colors. For example, the strawberry poison dart frog is bright red. The *Phylllobates terribilis* is bright yellow. The bright color warns other creatures that the frog is poisonous. This deters predators from eating the frog.

In addition to these physical adaptations, the poison dart frog also has a behavioral adaptation. The female poison dart frog lays eggs on a leaf. The leaf hides them from predators. Then she moves them to water once they hatch. Poison dart frogs have many ways to stay safe!

The poison dart frog has the same predators and prey as other kinds of frogs, but it has special physical features and behaviors that help it survive. Who ever thought that something so beautiful could be so dangerous?

Sources:

DK Publishing, *Everything You Need to Know about Frogs and Other Slippery Creatures*, pages 16, 17, 46, and 47

EL Education, "The Poison Dart Frog"