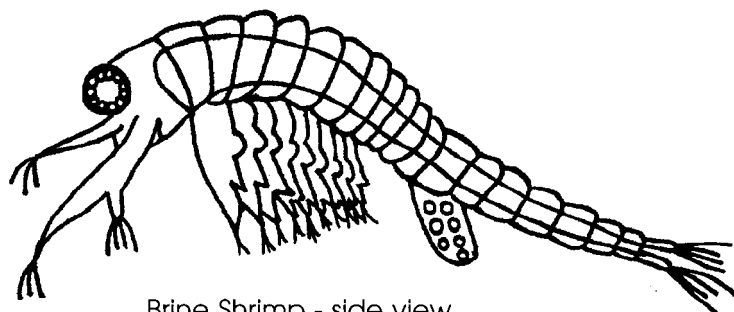


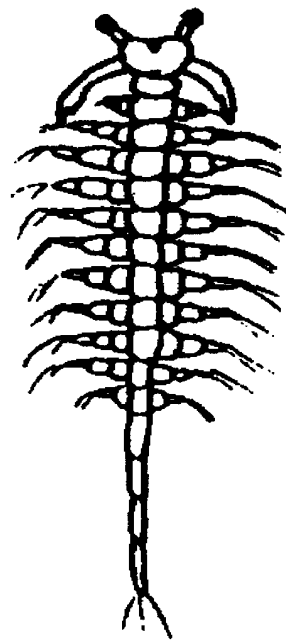
A Brine Shrimp Primer

Have you ever seen a crab? You can find crabs on most ocean beaches. Crabs and brine shrimp are similar in many ways. People who study them call them both crustaceans.



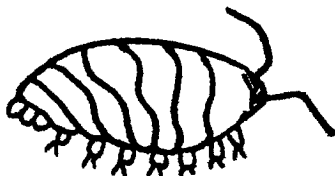
Brine Shrimp - side view

Brine Shrimp - top view



There are over 20,000 kinds of crustaceans. Most crustaceans are less than 3 centimeters long. They are an important source of food for water animals.

Some crustaceans live on land. The sowbugs you find in your garden or basement are crustaceans. They live in wet soil. They curl up into tight balls when disturbed.



Sow bug

Other crustaceans live in fresh water. Crayfish live in streams and lakes. Water fleas live in ponds.

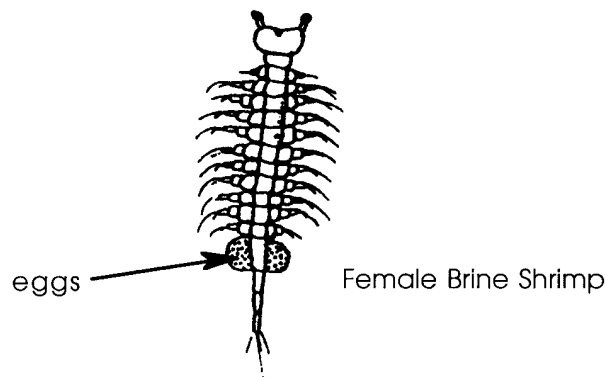
Most crustaceans live in saltwater. Some can live in water with a lot of salt in it. Very salty water is called brine. Brine shrimp can hatch and live in very salty water. They usually live along the sea coast. They also live in salt lakes and in salt flats. But, they are not found in the open sea. No one knows why this is so. You can grow brine shrimp in a jar of sea water.

Did you notice that the word "crust" is part of "crustacean"? All crustaceans have a hard "crust" or shell. The shell is like an outside skeleton. It protects the soft body.

Some crustaceans are used by humans. Brine shrimp are eaten by some people in Africa. Pet shop workers feed brine shrimp to their fish.

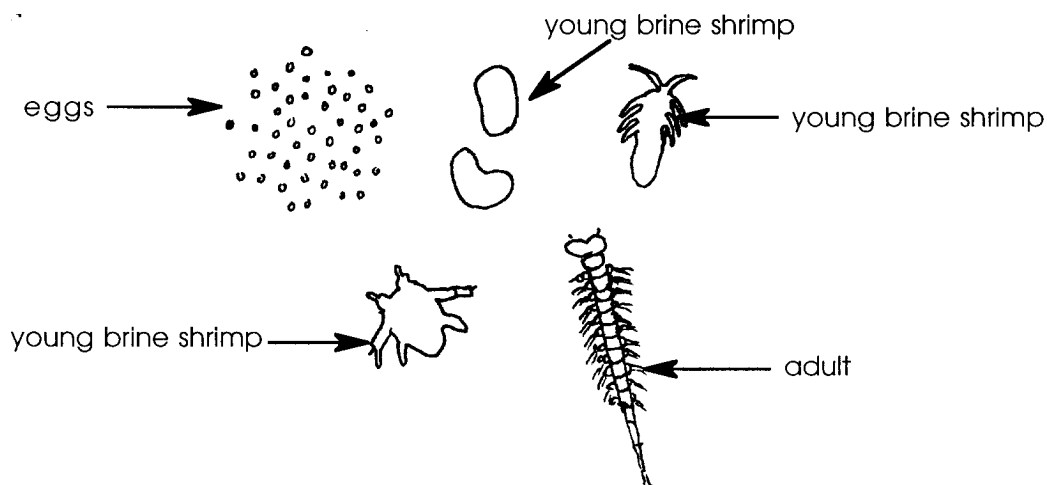
Brine shrimp hatch from eggs. While animal eggs come in all sizes, brine shrimp eggs are tiny. They look like a fine brown powder. You can raise brine shrimp from these eggs. The eggs are collected at the edge of salt lakes or pools.

Brine shrimp are different than many other egg laying animals. The first eggs a female shrimp makes hatch inside her. They come out as young brine shrimp. All her other eggs come into the water as eggs.



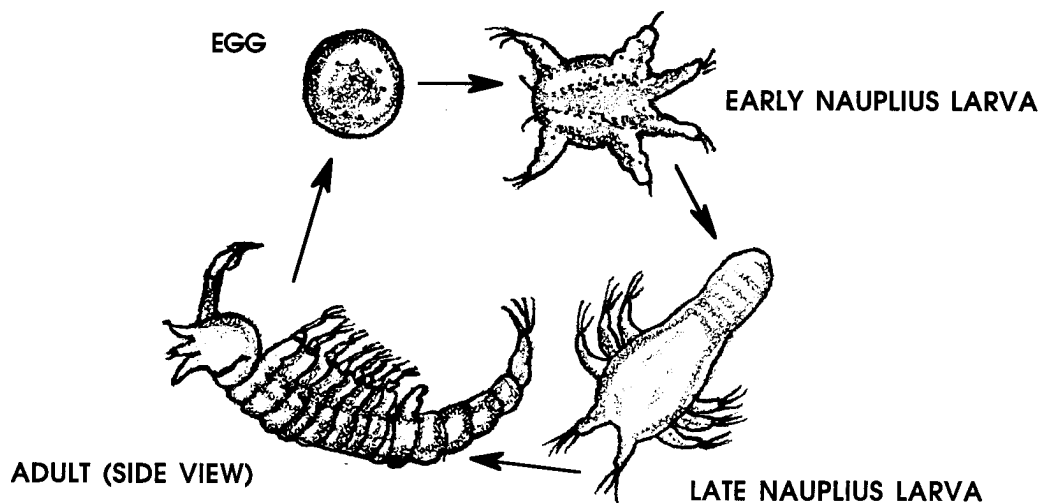
The eggs float on top of the water. Wind blows the eggs on to the shore. There they dry out. Brine shrimp eggs must dry before they will hatch. Dry eggs can be kept for years. They will still hatch when put in salt water.

Many baby animals look like their parents. A young brine shrimp does not look like its parents. The young brine shrimp begins to grow. But wait. What about its hard shell? Shells do not grow. As the shrimp grows, it pushes against its shell. Soon, the shell spits open. The brine shrimp comes out with a larger, soft new shell. This getting rid of its shell is called "molting".



Brine Shrimp Life Stages

The brine shrimp keeps growing. Soon it's ready to molt again. Its shell splits open. The shrimp comes out. Its body grows bigger. Then the shell gets hard again. After a few molts, the brine shrimp looks like its parents.



A female brine shrimp can have babies when it is three to six weeks old.

Looking At Your Brine Shrimp

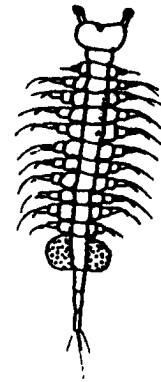
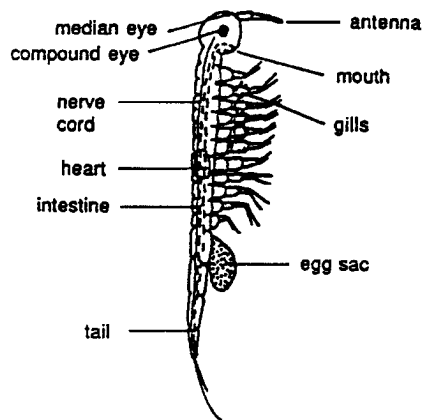
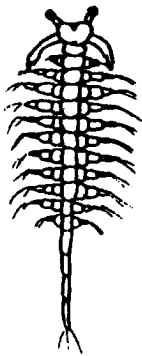
A habitat is a place where an animal lives and grows. If you raised brine shrimp in class, you made a habitat for your brine shrimp. You put water and salt in a glass jar. The shrimp lived if there was enough salt in the jar.

- How much salt did you add to the water?
- Did any of the eggs hatch?
- Were you able to raise any of the hatched shrimp?

If you raised brine shrimp,

- look for females with pouches of eggs
- see if any of yours live long enough to have babies
- notice the length of the life cycle of your brine shrimp. The life cycle for your shrimp starts when the eggs hatch. The life cycle ends when a baby shrimp has babies of its own.

Brine shrimp have many pairs of legs. The legs hang along the side of a it's body. Some of the legs help it to swim. The legs act like paddles.



If you raised brine shrimp,

- can you see that brine shrimp swim upside down?
Be sure to look carefully.

When you go to the library, look for books about the life of brine shrimp or other crustaceans.