

Monarch Eggs and Instars Guide

budburst
a project of the Chicago Botanic Garden

Eggs



Photo credit: Courtney Celley/
USFWS



Photo credit: Joanna Gilkeson/
USFWS



Photo credit: Joanna Gilkeson/
USFWS



Photo credit: Lorie Shaull

Female monarch butterflies usually lay a single egg on the underside of a milkweed leaf. Eggs are about the size of a pencil tip and look white or slightly yellow. Inside a caterpillar develops and hatches in about four days.

Instar Stages 1-5



Photo credit: NCTC Creative Imagery/USFWS

Monarch larvae spend 1-3 days in the first instar stage; they are 2-6 mm long with faint stripes and small bumps where their front tentacles will grow. Larvae in instar stages 2-5 are longer than 6mm with distinct black and white stripes and have a set of tentacles growing at both their front and back ends.