

What is a tunicate?

Tunicates are marine invertebrate animals (animals lacking a backbone) that are commonly found attached to rocks in the coastal ocean. If you spend time around harbors and marinas you are likely to have seen them attached to docks and pier pilings.

Tunicates have a swimming larval stage, but during their adult stage most species are permanently attached to a substrate.

Tunicates may be solitary (single animals, like humans) or colonial (living attached to one another, like corals).

Both solitary and colonial tunicates have sac-like bodies and feed by filtering water. Water is drawn in through an incurrent siphon and expelled through an out current siphon.

The siphons will sometimes expel water when touched, hence the nickname “sea squirts.”