

## Pet Toxins

- 1) **Antifreeze:** Many people do not realize it, but common antifreeze kills many pets each year. It smells and tastes very sweet to your dog and is very appealing to him. Ethylene glycol is toxic however, and each winter, many animals are killed by it. Symptoms of toxicity include seizures, vomiting, stumbling and lethargy leading to kidney failure. Make sure to keep your antifreeze out of your dog's reach. If you suspect that your dog has ingested antifreeze, take your dog to the veterinarian immediately.
- 2) **Chocolate:** Chocolate contains a substance called theobromine which is toxic to dogs. Baking chocolate and dark chocolate is especially dangerous. While it usually takes a somewhat large amount of chocolate to kill a dog, poisoning and death does occur with smaller amounts ingested. Signs of chocolate poisoning include vomiting, diarrhea, increased urination, and increased activity. This can progress to seizures and unusual heart rhythms. Call your veterinarian immediately if you suspect your dog has eaten chocolate.
- 3) **Bleach:** As you might imagine, household bleach is toxic to dogs. Keep all products containing bleach out of your dog's reach. Symptoms of bleach poisoning include drooling, vomiting, and abdominal pain. Do NOT induce vomiting if you suspect your dog has ingested bleach and contact your veterinarian immediately.
- 4) **Tylenol:** As little as two regular strength Tylenol tablets can kill a small dog. Dogs lack the proper liver enzymes to break down acetaminophen. Signs of toxicity include drooling, lethargy, and abdominal pain. If you suspect your dog has ingested Tylenol, call your veterinarian immediately.
- 5) **Watch Batteries:** If your dog ingests a watch battery, it can cause a potentially fatal ulceration in the stomach within 12 hours. All other alkaline batteries are toxic to dogs as well. Symptoms of toxicity include drooling, lack of appetite, vomiting, and lethargy. If you suspect your dog has ingested a watch battery, contact your vet immediately.
- 6) **Moth Balls:** Moth balls are very dangerous to dogs. They contain an insecticide that causes central nervous system excitement and seizures. When metabolized, ingestion of moth balls can lead to liver failure. Symptoms of poisoning by moth balls include vomiting and seizures. If your dog has consumed moth balls, do NOT induce vomiting. Seek veterinary care immediately.
- 7) **Fabric Softeners and other detergents:** All sorts of household detergents are toxic to dogs at one level or another, but fabric softeners fall into the highly toxic category. Signs of toxicity include vomiting, lethargy, burns to the mouth, drooling, muscle weakness, and even coma. Do NOT induce vomiting if your dog has ingested any detergent. Contact your veterinarian immediately.
- 8) **Mouthwash:** Mouthwash can contain boric acid which is highly toxic to dogs. Symptoms of poisoning by mouthwash include vomiting, drooling, seizures, and coma. You should take your dog to the veterinarian immediately if you suspect poisoning by mouthwash or other household item containing boric acid like contact lens solution or denture cleaner.
- 9) **Peach Pits:** With most fruits, the pits and the seeds are toxic to dogs. Signs of poisoning include drooling, vomiting, and lethargy. If you suspect your dog has eaten a peach pit or the pit or seeds of any fruit, take him to the veterinarian immediately.
- 10) **Household Plants:** Many common and popular household plants are highly toxic to dogs. A partial list of toxic plants includes poinsettias, lilies, ferns, devil's ivy, aloe, and ivy. Symptoms of poisoning due to ingestion of toxic plants include vomiting and central nervous system excitement. Many of these plants are fatal if ingested. Please contact your veterinarian immediately if you suspect your dog has eaten a toxic houseplant.

With diligence on our part, we can help prevent our dogs from getting into substances that are toxic to them. Many veterinary school websites offer lists of things that are toxic to dogs and what you should do if your dog ingests such things. As always, if you think your dog may have eaten something dangerous, contact your veterinarian immediately or take your dog to the closest emergency clinic.

## Further Considerations

- \* **Alcoholic beverages.** Because alcohol can be fatal to dogs, no amount of alcoholic beverage is safe... yes; even beer should be off limits.
- \* **Chocolate** is toxic to canines. The darker the chocolate, the more harmful. The methylxanthines (caffeine and theobromine) in chocolate can cause a dog to vomit, have diarrhea, experience rapid, irregular heart beat, have increased urination, and experience muscle tremors and seizures. The effects can be serious. Death from chocolate toxicity can occur within 24 hours.
- \* **Coffee, tea and cola** are people-food. They contain caffeine, a methylxanthine also found in chocolate. The signs of toxicity include rapid heart beat, hyperexcitability, tremors, and seizures.
- \* **Macadamia nuts** can temporarily cause muscle weakness, often in the hind legs. Other signs include vomiting, fever, and abdominal pain. The mechanism of the toxicity is unknown. Affected dogs recover with no treatment and no long-term effects.
- \* **Onions and garlic** have a chemical that damages red blood cells in dogs and can cause anemia. Even one small whole onion can cause death. So be particularly careful when disposing of left-overs that contain a significant amount of onions, such as pizza or Chinese take-out. The small amounts of onion and garlic powder used in pet foods is safe and well below the toxic levels.

- \* **Raisins and grapes** seem like fun toys to a dog. But they can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and kidney failure. The minimum safe amount is not known, so keep these foods well out of reach of curious muzzles.
- \* **Sugarless gums and candies** are certainly sweet, but the sugar substitute **xylitol** can cause a rapid drop in your dog's blood sugar.
- \* **Moldy or spoiled food** and garbage should stay safely in the trash. They can contain multiple toxins causing vomiting, diarrhea, and damage to internal organs.
- \* **Yeast dough**, like the kind used in making bread or desserts, is designed to expand. If swallowed by an unsuspecting canine, it can expand and produce gas in the digestive system, causing pain and possibly rupture of the stomach or intestines.
- \* Medications such as **Ibuprofen**, **Tylenol**, and **Naproxen** may give you some relief, but painkillers and other common medications can be **deadly** to your dog. Keep all prescription and over-the-counter drugs - including painkillers, anti-inflammatory drugs, cold medicines, diet pills, antidepressants, anti-cancer drugs, and vitamins - in closed cabinets out of your pets' reach. Never give your dog medication unless directed by a vet.
- \* Plants are pretty but possibly deadly for your dog. Many common yard and houseplants can be poisonous, including **lily, daffodil, oleander, rhododendron, azalea, yew, foxglove, rhubarb leaves, and cycads**.

As a general rule, giving dogs chocolate on purpose is NOT a good idea. The problem with chocolate is the theobromine and the caffeine content. Theobromine, if ingested, can cause hyperactivity, vomiting/diarrhea, increase urination, irregular/rapid heartbeat, seizures and tremors. Caffeine content can also cause hyperactivity, rapid heartbeat, tremors and seizures as well. When it comes to chocolate and dogs, here are some helpful guidelines for how much is too much:

- Milk Chocolate - one ounce per pound of body weight (more is harmful)
- Semi-Sweet Chocolate - one ounce per 3 pounds of body weight
- Baker's Chocolate - one ounce per 9 pounds of body weight (this is the most dangerous of all)

**Milk:** Dog's do not possess the enzyme that is necessary to digest dairy products. It's not a deadly thing, but you'll suffer some consequences, nonetheless. Fragrant diarrhea (or terrible gas build-up) may very well follow.

Further cautions:

- avocado (can be lethal - guacamole too)
- broccoli (can cause upset stomach in large quantities)
- grapes/raisins (just 6 grapes CAN kill a dog)
- raw eggs (Avidin in it can cause major deformations)
- fatty foods (can trigger pancreatitis in prone dogs)
- liver (can cause vitamin A toxicity)
- mistletoe (in larger amounts, generally)
- nuts (can cause bladder stones, and many other debilitating conditions)
- green potatoes (contain solanum alkoids that can be dangerous)

Remember ... milk chocolate **CAN** kill a dog, it just takes more of it than, say, baker's chocolate. Also, chicken bones can be perfectly fine for a dog, but **not cooked** chicken bones (when cooked, the bones get brittle and splinter ... **raw bones are usually fine**, as many dogs on a BARF diet (bones and raw food) eat entire pieces of chicken whole, bones and all). Dogs can absolutely digest human foods ... every meat and vegetable out there was animal food before it was ever human food! Animals have been around longer than humans. **It's the cooking/seasoning process that might make some foods not ok for dogs**. But many raw or cooked (not seasoned) "human foods" are not only ok for dogs, but are actually very good for them!

**CATS:**

**Alcoholic beverages** Can cause intoxication, coma, and death.

**Baby food** Can contain onion powder, which can be toxic to cats. (Please see onion below.) Can also result in nutritional deficiencies, if fed in large amounts.

**Bones** from fish, poultry, or other meat sources Can cause obstruction or laceration of the digestive system.

**Canned tuna** (for human consumption) Large amounts can cause malnutrition, since it **lacks proper levels of vitamins and minerals**.

**Chocolate, coffee, tea**, and other caffeine Contain **caffeine, theobromine, or theophylline**, which can be toxic and affect the heart and nervous system.

**Citrus oil** extracts Can cause vomiting.

**Dog food** If accidental ingestion, will not cause a problem; if fed repeatedly, may result in malnutrition and diseases affecting the heart.

**Fat trimmings** Can cause pancreatitis.

**Grapes and raisins** Contain an unknown toxin, which can damage the kidneys.

Human vitamin supplements containing **iron** Can damage the lining of the digestive system and be toxic to the other organs including the liver and kidneys.

Large amounts of **liver** Can cause Vitamin A toxicity, which affects muscles and bones.

**Macadamia nuts** Contain an unknown toxin, which can affect the digestive and nervous systems and muscle.

**Marijuana** Can depress the nervous system, cause vomiting, and changes in the heart rate.

**Milk** and other dairy products Some adult cats and dogs do not have sufficient amounts of the enzyme lactase, which breaks down the lactose in milk. This can result in diarrhea. **Lactose-free milk products are available for cats.**

**Moldy or spoiled food**, garbage Can contain multiple toxins causing vomiting and diarrhea and can also affect other organs.

**Mushrooms** Can contain toxins, which may affect multiple systems in the body, cause shock, and result in death.

**Onions and garlic** (raw, cooked, or powder) Contain sulfoxides and disulfides, which can damage red blood cells and cause anemia. Cats are more susceptible than dogs. Garlic is less toxic than onions.

**Persimmons Seeds** can cause intestinal obstruction and enteritis.

**Potato, rhubarb, and tomato leaves**; potato and tomato stems Contain oxalates, which can affect the digestive, nervous, and urinary systems. This is more of a problem in livestock.

**Raw eggs** Contain an enzyme called avidin, which decreases the absorption of biotin (a B vitamin). This can lead to skin and hair coat problems. Raw eggs may also contain Salmonella.

**Raw fish** Can result in a thiamine (a B vitamin) deficiency leading to loss of appetite, seizures, and in severe cases, death. More common if raw fish is fed regularly.

**Salt** If eaten in large quantities it may lead to electrolyte imbalances.

**String** Can become trapped in the digestive system; called a "string foreign body."

**Sugary** foods Can lead to obesity, dental problems, and possibly diabetes mellitus.

**Table scraps** (in large amounts) Table scraps are not nutritionally balanced. They should never be more than 10% of the diet. Fat should be trimmed from meat; bones should not be fed.

**Tobacco** Contains nicotine, which affects the digestive and nervous systems. Can result in rapid heart beat, collapse, coma, and death.

**Yeast dough** Can expand and produce gas in the digestive system, causing pain and possible rupture of the stomach or intestines.