

# IT'S A DANGEROUS WORLD FOR PETS!

## COMMON POISONS

Toxicity and poisoning are very common in pets. Many times pet owners have no idea that a particular product or food item is dangerous. Prevention is the best medicine, so keep these items out of reach!

By far the most common poisoning of pets is the **pet's own medications** or **their owner's medications**: Never leave pill bottles within reach of pets! Call us or a poison control hotline immediately if your dog or cat gets into any medication.

Some dogs will chew through the plastic bottle to get to flavored chewable medications, their own or someone else's. Eating an entire bottle of thyroid supplements or pain medications can be a very bad thing! Don't leave your dog's arthritis medication on the kitchen counter!

Never give cats **Tylenol (acetaminophen)**. This pain reliever is deadly to cats and is used sparingly in dogs. Cats also don't tolerate **aspirin** well.



Don't give a **medication prescribed for one pet** to a different one without consulting your veterinarian. What's good for one pet may be toxic to another, and if your pet is already on medication there could be drug interactions to worry about as well.

**Sidewalk salt** is a concern in the winter. It can burn pets' feet when they walk through it and it's also toxic if they lick too much of it off their feet.

**Mouse or rat poison** – very common, very dangerous, and symptoms won't appear for several weeks after exposure. Don't leave rodent bait where your pet can get it. Cats can also die from rodent poison by eating the mouse that ate the bait. If your cat can catch the mice, don't use these products!

**Antifreeze (ethylene glycol)** is deadly to pets. A cat or small dog that walks through a puddle on the garage floor and then licks its feet can ingest a toxic dose. Antifreeze is sweet tasting, so dogs like to drink it (cats can't taste sweet). If you change your own antifreeze at home, use propylene glycol instead of ethylene glycol. It's not only safer but it's better for the environment, too.

**Ant traps** are sweet tasting and dogs will chew them up if they can get ahold of them. Luckily, they have low toxicity and severe poisoning from them is rare.

**Alcohol and recreational drugs** aren't safe for pets – an ounce of whisky can kill a small dog. Alcohol poisoning usually occurs because someone thinks it would be funny to see a pet drunk. It's not so funny when the pet dies.

**Mole poison** is not only deadly to pets but it can kill the pet owner as well. As an animal is dying from ingestion of mole bait they breathe off a deadly gas. Literally, if your pet breathes on you



(or someone at the veterinary hospital when you rush your pet in) you will die too. Why this stuff is even available for purchase is beyond us.

**Paintballs**, which give a very interesting looking diarrhea as well as severe electrolyte imbalances, can be deadly. Pets who ingest paintballs usually live in a household with teenagers. Make sure your kids are aware of the risk from leaving these items lying around.

**Gorilla Glue**, which expands in the stomach like bread dough and then hardens, requires immediate emergency surgery to save the pet.

**Lawn chemicals** are associated with cancer in dogs. We advise against using broadcast herbicides or insecticides on your grass if you have pets.



## PLANT POISONS

Poinsettia is not very poisonous but some plants can be very dangerous. We have a complete list of common toxic plants available if you are interested.

## COMMON FOOD POISONINGS IN PETS

### **Chocolate**

Chocolate contains two chemicals that can be toxic to dogs, caffeine and theobromine. Both are in the class of chemicals called methylxanthines. These compounds affect the central nervous system. Depending on the amount the pet consumes, an affected dog may show signs of increased heart rate, hyperactivity, tremors, diarrhea, lethargy, increased thirst and urination, vomiting and even death.

Chocolate is the most common food toxicity we see, especially around Halloween and the holidays. Hershey's kisses are especially popular among dogs, who don't seem to mind the foil wrappings at all! Childproof your kitchen for your dogs as well as your children!

### **Grapes and raisins**

These fruits can cause renal (kidney) failure in dogs. It is not yet known what the toxic dose is and poisoning has been reported after a pet has eaten just a few. Do not use grapes or raisins as treats or training rewards for your dog. If your pet accidentally eats either grapes or raisins please contact us immediately.

### **Macadamia nuts**

Macadamia nut toxicity causes depression, high fever, tremors, vomiting and weakness. The exact chemical or reason for dog's sensitivity to them is unknown. Symptoms usually develop within 12 hours of ingestion.

### **Onions**

Raw, powdered or cooked onions can all be toxic to dogs and cats, as can related vegetables such as chives, garlic, leeks and shallots. They are all members of the Allium family of plants. The toxin contained in these plants is n-propyl disulfide. This chemical damages red blood cells, which then break apart, leading to anemia.

Think onions aren't something you'd give to a dog or cat? We have clients who feed their dogs homemade diets that include vegetables. Some pets will eat any table food that's fried,



including peppers and onions tossed as the owner is cooking. The small amount of onion powder contained in some types of meat baby foods is enough to cause toxicity in cats if fed the baby food for more than a few days in a row.

### **Rising bread dough**

Bread dough rising on a counter or table is a tempting target for a dog. Once in the stomach, body heat causes the dough to rise quickly, producing a toxic amount of ethanol. The volume of the expanding dough can also cause severe stomach distension. Affected pets show signs of both stomach obstruction and ethanol toxicity, including severe abdominal pain, vomiting, bloating, and incoordination from the ethanol.

### **Any food with mold on it**

Molds contain toxic chemicals that can affect the nervous system, leading to incoordination, muscle tremors, and seizures that can last for days. Inducing vomiting, administering activated charcoal or pumping the stomach may help early on. Supportive care and controlling seizures are needed after that.

### **Xylitol**

Xylitol is an artificial sweetener used in candy and sugar-free chewing gum. It causes electrolyte disturbances and death in pets. One or two pieces of gum are enough to kill a small dog and a large dog would only have to chew up one pack.

## **PETS ARE OUR CANARIES IN THE COAL MINE**

Studies show high levels of industrial and toxic chemicals in America's pets. Researchers at a Virginia veterinary clinic pooled samples of blood and urine from 20 dogs and 37 cats, and found that they were contaminated with 48 of the 70 industrial chemicals tested. Dog samples were contaminated with 35 chemicals, including 11 carcinogens, 31 chemicals toxic to the reproductive system and 24 neurotoxins.

Dogs and cats ingest pollutants in tap water or from plastic dishes and pet food cans. They play on lawns with pesticide and herbicide residues, breathe indoor contaminants and lick up dirty water or rotten garbage. As cats groom themselves they lick off accumulated dust that often contains fire retardant chemicals used to make furniture, carpeting and drapes more fire resistant. Fish or canned foods containing fish can also contain mercury and other heavy metals.



The average levels of chemicals in pets tends to be much higher than in people, including 2.4 times higher levels of perfluorochemicals in dogs, 23 times more polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) in cats and more than 5 times the amount of mercury than people for both cats and dogs. Cat samples contained 46 chemicals, including 9 carcinogens, 40 chemicals toxic to the reproductive system, 34 neurotoxins and 15 endocrine system toxins.

These chemicals aren't just showing up, they are also causing illness. Dogs have much higher rates of cancer than do people, including 35 times more skin cancer, 4 times more breast tumors, 8 times more bone cancer and twice the incidence of leukemia. Lawn chemicals have been linked to bladder cancer in Scotties, PBDEs are thought to be the cause of thyroid tumors in cats and cigarette smoke causes leukemia, lung cancer and respiratory disease in pets.

Flea products sold in grocery and pet stores often contain permethrins and pyrethrins, which can be toxic to cats. According to a study done by a veterinary poison control service, 96.9% of cats exposed to permethrin spot-on products develop symptoms, including seizures, muscle twitching, incoordination and salivation. 10.5% of the cats died.



