



Common Poisonings in Dogs and Cats

Pets are most often poisoned by common items that are in most households. Antifreeze gets a lot of publicity for being toxic to animals (and people). It is a sweet tasting liquid that can cause kidney failure if ingested. Did you know that onions can cause the same type of kidney damage and even death if eaten by a dog or cat? Onions are members of the Allium family which also includes garlic, chives, and even lilies. All parts of these plants, even the flowers, can cause symptoms in animals. Eating a small leaf from a lily can produce severe poisoning in a cat. Garlic contains sulfur compounds that can also cause red blood cells to be destroyed. Cats are more sensitive to the chemicals in the Allium plant family, but dogs can also be affected by these substances. Cats and dogs should not be fed onions or garlic and ornamental lily plants should be kept out of reach of animals.

Chewing gum is a relatively new player in the world of pet poisons. Not all chewing gum is toxic. However, several popular brands contain a sweetener called xylitol. Xylitol can cause dangerously low blood sugar in dogs. It also has coagulation problems. Xylitol is a sugar alcohol used as a sweetener in many products, including sugar-free gum, chewable vitamins, oral-care products, and baked goods. It can be purchased in a granulated form for cereals and beverages.



Everyone loves the smell of fresh baked bread! Did you know that uncooked yeast dough poses a potential fatal threat to pets? If an animal eats uncooked dough it could cause an intestinal blockage. Also the fermentation process produces alcohol that could poison the pet. Keep all dough products out of the reach of dogs and cats. Beer making introduces another potential deadly threat. Hops, one of the main ingredients in beer making, can affect the temperature regulating process in the brain of animals. Malignant hyperthermia is a condition where the animal's body temperature rises steadily out of control. It can reach 106-107 degrees. High temperatures can result in seizures and even death.

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There are other food products that can be toxic to animals. Most cases of incidental poisonings involve dogs because they are not as finicky about eating as cats. Chocolate contains theobromine and caffeine. Both these substances can cause problems with heart regulation and central nervous system disturbances. Chocolate also contains significant amounts of fat. Symptoms can include vomiting and diarrhea, hyperactivity, high blood pressure, muscle tremors and even seizures.



Grapes and raisins can cause acute kidney failure. The cause of this is still being investigated; no one knows for sure why this happens. Macadamia nuts are another mystery food item that causes vomiting, diarrhea and extreme muscle weakness in dogs.

Many animals die every year from ingesting medications meant for their human partners. Just as you would "baby" proof your house, you also need to pet proof. All medications need to be put into upper cabinets. Medications left on countertops can be accessed by cats or dogs and knocked onto the floor. Even child proof caps are no match for dogs that can chew the bottles open. Never give animals any medications meant for humans unless directed by your veterinarian. Medications designed to work in the human body may have devastating effects on the system of an animal. One regular strength acetaminophen (brand name Tylenol®) can kill a cat. Ibuprofen can cause stomach ulcers and liver damage in animals.

More information on substances toxic to pets can be found on the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals website <http://www.aspca.org>. As the premier animal-oriented poison control center in North America, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center is your best resource for any animal poison-related emergency, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. **Make the call that can make all the difference: (888) 426-4435.** A consultation fee will be applied to your credit card.