

People Foods that are Toxic to Pets

Most of us have heard chocolate is poisonous to pets, but do you know that other common foods may also be toxic for dogs and cats? Every day Pet Poison Helpline receives many calls about pets getting into people food. Here are eight of the most harmful.

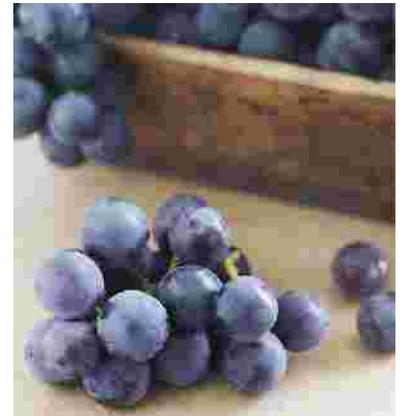
GRAPES, RAISINS, AND CURRANTS

What they're in: Uncooked grapes, raisins, and currants are likely more toxic than cooked fruit. Don't forget about raisins in cereals, trail mixes, baked goods, and snack boxes.

Threat to pets: These fruits can cause acute kidney failure in dogs and may cause kidney failure in cats and ferrets as well. While not all dogs and cats will develop kidney failure, it's impossible to know which pets will be sensitive to these fruits. Therefore, all pets—especially dogs—that ingest grapes, raisins, or currants should be monitored closely and treated appropriately. If a small dog or cat eats just a small number of grapes or raisins, this is considered an emergency.

Signs: Vomiting within a few hours of ingestion is typical. Within one to four days of ingestion, pets may experience increased urination, increased thirst, lethargy, and a reduced appetite.

Prognosis: Excellent if animals are treated before signs begin. Once they have begun to go into kidney failure, the prognosis becomes much worse.



CAFFEINE

What it's in: Caffeine is most commonly found in coffee, coffee grounds, tea, tea bags, soda, energy drinks, and diet pills. Theobromine—a cousin chemical to caffeine—is also found in chocolate.

Threat to pets: Pets are more sensitive to the effects of caffeine than people. While a couple laps of coffee, tea, or soda won't poison most pets, the ingestion of moderate amounts of coffee grounds, tea bags, or one to two diet pills can easily be fatal in small animals.



Signs: Within two hours of exposure, pets may experience mild to severe hyperactivity, restlessness, vomiting, tachycardia (elevated heart rate), hypertension (elevated blood pressure), abnormal heart rhythms, tremors, hyperthermia (elevated body temperature), seizures, and could collapse.

Prognosis: Excellent in pets with mild signs, such as slight restlessness or a minimally elevated heart rate. Poor in those with severe signs, such as collapsing and seizures.

CHOCOLATE

What it's in: When it comes to chocolate, dark equals dangerous. That's because the darker the chocolate, the larger the amount of theobromine—a cousin chemical to caffeine—it contains. Thus, baker's chocolate, semi-sweet chocolate, cocoa powder, and gourmet dark chocolates are more toxic than milk chocolate. White chocolate has very little theobromine and will not cause poisoning in pets. Cocoa shell mulch can have every high levels of theobromine and should never be used around animals.

Threat to pets: The dose ingested determines the danger. Pets that ingest a few M&Ms or a bite of a chocolate chip cookie are unlikely to develop chocolate poisoning.

For milk chocolate, any ingestion of more than 0.5 ounces per pound of body weight may put dogs and cats at risk. Ingestions of more than 0.13 ounces per pound of body weight of dark or semi-sweet chocolate may cause poisoning. Almost all ingestions of baker's chocolate can result in poisoning and are considered emergencies.

Very young pets, geriatric pets, and animals with underlying disease are at a higher risk for poisoning than healthy, adult dogs and cats. Due to the large amount of fat in chocolate, some pets may develop pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) after eating chocolate or baked goods containing chocolate.

Signs: Small amounts of chocolate may cause mild vomiting and diarrhea. Larger amounts can cause severe agitation, tachycardia (elevated heart rate), abnormal heart rhythms, tremors, seizures, and collapse.

Prognosis: Excellent in pets with mild signs, such as mild stomach upset or slight restlessness. Poor in those with severe signs, such as collapsing and seizures.

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENER XYLITOL

What it's in: Xylitol is a common sugar-substitute used in sugar-free chewing gum, breath mints, candies, and baked goods. It's also found in some smoking-cessation products like nicotine gum. Xylitol can be purchased in bulk for cooking at home, and because of its dental plaque fighting properties, nontoxic amounts can be found in some pet oral-care products.

Threat to pets: Xylitol may cause a life-threatening drop in blood sugar and can cause liver damage to dogs. Cats and people do not experience this problem. The typical dose needed to cause poisoning is at least 0.05 grams per pound of body weight.

The average piece of chewing gum or breath mint contains between 0.22 to 1.0 gram of xylitol. Thus, a 10-pound dog would only have to eat one piece of gum to achieve a potentially toxic dose.

The amount of xylitol typically found in most pet oral-care products is very small and, when used properly, these products don't cause poisoning unless a dog ingests a very large amount.



Signs: Within 10 to 15 minutes of ingestion, dogs may develop hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), lose coordination, and start vomiting. Collapse and seizures may quickly follow. In rare cases, these signs won't appear until hours after ingestion.

Prognosis: Excellent when the ingestion is caught early and blood sugars are monitored frequently. Guarded if the pet has already begun to develop liver failure.

ONIONS, GARLIC, CHIVES, AND LEEKS



What they're in: The small amount of garlic sometimes found in dog treats is unlikely to be harmful to dogs. However, if cats or dogs ingest a tasty pan of sautéed onions, garlic, or leeks, poisoning may result. The ingestion of large amounts of garlic pills or powder may also cause poisoning. Garlic was once thought of as a "home remedy" for flea infestations; however, it has been shown to be ineffective and is not recommended by Pet Poison Helpline.

Threat to pets: These vegetables can cause red blood cell destruction (specifically, Heinz body formation) and result in anemia. Ingestion of onions or garlic greater than 0.5 percent of a dog's body weight is potentially toxic. For example, this equates to a 30-pound dog ingesting about 2.5 ounces of onion or garlic. Cats and Japanese breeds of dogs (Akita, Shiba Inu) are even more sensitive to the effects of these plants.

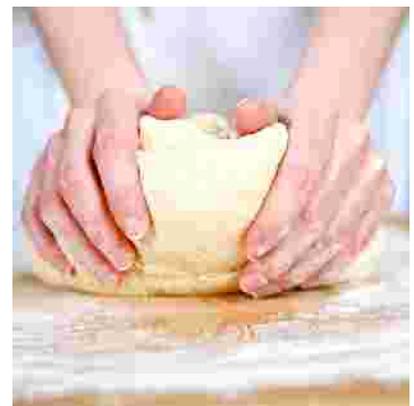
Signs: Onion or garlic smell on breath, lethargy, pale mucus membranes due to anemia, tachypnea (elevated respiratory rate), tachycardia (elevated heart rate), vomiting, and a reduced appetite. Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) is rare but possible.

Prognosis: Excellent with early intervention and appropriate care.

DOUGH

What it's in: Uncooked homemade and store-bought bread dough that contains yeast.

Threat to pets: The dark, warm environment of a pet's stomach acts as an oven and encourages the dough to continue rising. This can result in a bowel obstruction or a bloated or distended stomach. The stomach may then twist, leading to a gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV). This is a life-threatening situation that requires emergency abdominal surgery and treatment for shock. As the yeast ferments in the stomach, it releases alcohol, which may lead to alcohol poisoning (see alcohol).



Signs: Bloat and GDV: Unproductive vomiting and retching, lethargy, weakness, tachycardia (elevated heart

rate), collapse, and shock. Alcohol poisoning: Alcohol smell on the breath, neurological depression, hypothermia (low body temperature), hypotension (low blood pressure), seizures, and respiratory failure.

Prognosis: Excellent if decontaminated soon after ingestion and the appropriate care is received. Poorer in cases of severe alcohol poisoning and bloat or GDV.

ALCOHOL

What it's in: Alcoholic drinks aside, alcohol can be found in some surprising places. Rum-soaked cakes or candies and dressings containing alcohol may be poisonous to pets. Alcohol is also a major byproduct of ingested yeast-bread dough.



Threat to pets: Even small amounts of alcohol, especially when ingested by small pets, can cause life-threatening toxicity.

Signs: Alcohol smell on the breath, neurological depression, hypothermia (low body temperature), hypotension (low blood pressure), seizures, and respiratory failure.

Prognosis: Excellent provided the appropriate care is received.

FATTY FOODS

What they're in: Butter, oils, meat drippings, grease, chocolate, and meat scraps.

Threat to pets: Fatty foods may cause pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) when ingested, especially by dogs. Certain breeds, miniature Schnauzers in particular, are more likely to develop pancreatitis than other breeds.

Signs: Delayed onset vomiting one to four days after fatty meal ingestion, abdominal pain, diarrhea (with or without blood), reduced appetite, and lethargy.

Prognosis: Good when treated early and appropriately.

When in doubt as to if a food or medication is toxic call the Pet Poison Helpline at 800.213.6680.