

Top 10 toxins: Protect your dog from common dangers

Chocolate, grapes and raisins may be delicious to you, but they can be toxic to pets.

The veterinarians and toxicology experts at Pet Poison Helpline have released their top 10 list of household items that generated the most poison consultations for dogs and cats in 2013. The items below are presented in order of frequency, with number one being the item that caused the most emergency calls to Pet Poison Helpline. If at any time you think your pet has ingested a toxin, call your veterinarian.

Top 10 toxins for dogs

- 1) Chocolate:** Dark equals dangerous! Baking and dark chocolate are the most toxic, and milk chocolate can be dangerous if ingested in large amounts.
- 2) Xylitol:** This sweetener found in sugarless chewing gum and candy, medications and nasal sprays causes

a rapid drop in blood sugar and liver failure only in dogs (not cats).

- 3) Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs):** Ibuprofen, naproxen and so on, found in products such as Advil, Motrin and Aleve, are not easily metabolized by dogs; ingestions can result in stomach ulcers and kidney failure.

- 4) Over-the-counter cough, cold and allergy medications:** Those that contain acetaminophen or decongestants, such as pseudoephedrine or phenylephrine, are particularly toxic.

- 5) Rodenticides (mouse/rat poison):** These may cause internal bleeding (brodifacoum, bromadiolone and so on) or brain swelling (bromethalin), even in small amounts.

- 6) Grapes and raisins:** These harmless human foods may be tasty to you,

but cause kidney damage in dogs.

- 7) Insect bait stations:** These rarely cause poisoning in dogs—the bigger risk is bowel obstruction when dogs swallow the plastic casing.

- 8) Prescription ADD/ADHD medications:** Amphetamines such as Adderall, Concerta, Dexedrine and Vyvanse can cause tremors, seizures, cardiac problems and death in pets.

- 9) Glucosamine joint supplements:** Overdoses of these tasty products typically only cause diarrhea; however, in rare cases, liver failure can develop.

- 10) Oxygen absorbers and silica gel packets:** Iron-containing oxygen absorbers found in food packages or pet treats can cause iron poisoning. Silica gel packs, found in new shoes, purses or backpacks, is rarely a concern.



What to do if your pet gets poisoned

First, take a deep breath. The more calm, cool, and collected you are, the sooner you can seek the correct medical attention. Then get a handle on the situation by taking the following steps:

- 1) Remove your pet from the area. Make sure no other pets or children are exposed to the area, and safely remove any poisonous material.

- 2) Check to make sure your pet is breathing normally and acting fine otherwise.

- 3) Collect a sample of the material, along with the packaging, vial, or con-

tainer. You'll need that information to help your veterinarian or a pet poison expert assess the situation.

- 4) Don't give your dog any milk, food, salt, oil, or any other home remedies. Doing so will likely complicate the poisoning.

- 5) Never induce vomiting without talking to your veterinarian or a pet poison expert—doing so may be harmful.

- 6) Get help. Program your veterinarian's phone number into your phone, as well as an emergency veterinarian's number and a pet poison hotline number. There are two 24-hour hotlines:

Pet Poison Helpline at 800-213-6680 (\$35 per call) and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal's Animal Poison Control Center at 888-426-4435 (\$65 per call).

Remember that a pet's prognosis is always better when a toxicity is reported immediately, so don't wait to see if your pet becomes symptomatic before calling for help. Calling right away is safer for your pet and could help you save on treatment costs in the long run. Remember that there's a narrow window of time to decontaminate in cases of poisoning.