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888-426-4435

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People Foods to Avoid Feeding Your Pets

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Chocolate, Macadamia nuts, avocados...these foods may sound delicious to you, but they're actually quite dangerous for our animal companions. Our nutrition experts have put together a handy list of the top toxic people foods to avoid feeding your pet. As always, if you suspect your pet has eaten any of the following foods, please note the amount ingested and contact your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435.



Chocolate, Coffee, Caffeine

These products all contain substances called methylxanthines, which are found in cacao seeds, the fruit of the plant used to make coffee and in the nuts of an extract used in some sodas. When ingested by pets, methylxanthines can cause vomiting and diarrhea, panting, excessive thirst and urination, hyperactivity, abnormal heart rhythm, tremors, seizures and even death. Note that darker chocolate is more dangerous than milk chocolate. White chocolate has the lowest level of methylxanthines, while baking chocolate contains the highest.

Alcohol

Alcoholic beverages and food products containing alcohol can cause vomiting, diarrhea, decreased coordination, central nervous system depression, difficulty breathing, tremors, abnormal blood acidity, coma and even death.

Avocado

The leaves, fruit, seeds and bark of avocados contain Persin, which can cause vomiting and diarrhea in dogs. Birds and rodents are especially sensitive to avocado poisoning, and can develop congestion, difficulty breathing and fluid accumulation around the heart. Some ingestions may even be fatal.

Macadamia Nuts

Macadamia nuts are commonly used in many cookies and candies. However, they can cause problems for your canine companion. These nuts have caused weakness, depression, vomiting, tremors and hyperthermia in dogs. Signs usually appear within 12 hours of ingestion and last approximately 12 to 48 hours.

Grapes & Raisins

Although the toxic substance within grapes and raisins is unknown, these fruits can cause kidney failure. In pets who already have certain health problems, signs may be more dramatic.

Yeast Dough

Yeast dough can rise and cause gas to accumulate in your pet's digestive system. This can be painful and can cause the stomach or intestines to rupture. Because the risk diminishes after the dough is cooked and the yeast has fully risen, pets can have small bits of bread as treats. However, these treats should not constitute more than 5 percent to 10 percent of your pet's daily caloric intake.

Raw/Undercooked Meat, Eggs and Bones

Raw meat and raw eggs can contain bacteria such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli* that can be harmful to pets. In addition, raw eggs contain an enzyme called avidin that decreases the absorption of biotin (a B vitamin), which can lead to skin and coat problems. Feeding your pet raw bones may seem like a natural and healthy option that might occur if your pet lived in the wild. However, this can be very dangerous for a domestic pet, who might choke on bones, or sustain a grave injury should the bone splinter and become lodged in or puncture your pet's digestive tract.

Xylitol

Xylitol is used as a sweetener in many products, including gum, candy, baked goods and toothpaste. It can cause insulin release in most species, which can lead to liver failure. The

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increase in insulin leads to hypoglycemia (lowered sugar levels). Initial signs of toxicosis include vomiting, lethargy and loss of coordination. Signs can progress to recumbancy and seizures. Elevated liver enzymes and liver failure can be seen within a few days.

Onions, Garlic, Chives

These vegetables and herbs can cause gastrointestinal irritation and could lead to red blood cell damage. Although cats are more susceptible, dogs are also at risk if a large enough amount is consumed. Toxicity is normally diagnosed through history, clinical signs and microscopic confirmation of Heinz bodies. An occasional low dose, such as what might be found in pet foods or treats, likely will not cause a problem, but we recommend that you do NOT give your pets large quantities of these foods.

Milk

Because pets do not possess significant amounts of lactase (the enzyme that breaks down lactose in milk), milk and other milk-based products cause them diarrhea or other digestive upset.

Salt

Large amounts of salt can produce excessive thirst and urination, or even sodium ion poisoning in pets. Signs that your pet may have eaten too many salty foods include vomiting, diarrhea, depression, tremors, elevated body temperature, seizures and even death. In other words, keep those salty chips to yourself!

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A Poison Safe Home



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Foods to Avoid Feeding Your Pet

- Alcoholic beverages
- Avocado
- Chocolate (all forms)
- Coffee (all forms)
- Fatty foods
- Macadamia nuts
- Moldy or spoiled foods
- Onions, onion powder
- Raisins and grapes
- Salt
- Yeast dough
- Garlic
- Products sweetened with xylitol

Warm Weather Hazards

- Animal toxins—toads, insects, spiders, snakes and scorpions
- Blue-green algae in ponds
- Citronella candles
- Cocoa mulch
- Compost piles Fertilizers
- Flea products
- Outdoor plants and plant bulbs
- Swimming-pool treatment supplies
- Fly baits containing methomyl
- Slug and snail baits containing metaldehyde

Medication

Common examples of human medications that can be potentially lethal to pets, even in small doses, include:

- Pain killers
- Cold medicines
- Anti-cancer drugs
- Antidepressants
- Vitamins
- Diet Pills

Cold Weather Hazards

- Antifreeze
- Liquid potpourri
- Ice melting products



- Rat and mouse bait

Common Household Hazards

- Fabric softener sheets
- Mothballs
- Post-1982 pennies (due to high concentration of zinc)

Holiday Hazards

- Christmas tree water (may contain fertilizers and bacteria, which, if ingested, can upset the stomach.
- Electrical cords
- Ribbons or tinsel (can become lodged in the intestines and cause intestinal obstruction—most often occurs with kittens!)
- Batteries
- Glass ornaments

Non-toxic Substances for Dogs and Cats

The following substances are considered to be non-toxic, although they may cause mild gastrointestinal upset in some animals:

- Water-based paints
- Toilet bowl water
- Silica gel
- Poinsettia
- Cat litter
- Glue traps
- Glow jewelry

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17 Poisonous Plants

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Lilies Members of the *Lilium spp.* are considered to be highly toxic to cats. While the poisonous component has not yet been identified, it is clear that with even ingestions of very small amounts of the plant, severe kidney damage could result.

Marijuana

Ingestion of *Cannabis sativa* by companion animals can result in depression of the central nervous system and incoordination, as well as vomiting, diarrhea, drooling, increased heart rate, and even seizures and coma.

Sago Palm

All parts of *Cycas Revoluta* are poisonous, but the seeds or "nuts" contain the largest amount of toxin. The ingestion of just one or two seeds can result in very serious effects, which include vomiting, diarrhea, depression, seizures and liver failure.

Tulip/Narcissus bulbs

The bulb portions of *Tulipa/Narcissus spp.* contain toxins that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation, drooling, loss of appetite, depression of the central nervous system, convulsions and cardiac abnormalities.

Azalea/Rhododendron

Members of the *Rhododendron spp.* contain substances known as grayantoxins, which can produce vomiting, drooling, diarrhea, weakness and depression of the central nervous system in animals. Severe azalea poisoning could ultimately lead to coma and death from cardiovascular collapse.

Oleander

All parts of *Nerium oleander* are considered to be toxic, as they contain cardiac glycosides that have the potential to cause serious effects—including gastrointestinal tract irritation, abnormal heart function, hypothermia and even death.

Castor Bean

The poisonous principle in *Ricinus communis* is ricin, a highly toxic protein that can produce severe abdominal pain, drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive thirst, weakness and loss of appetite. Severe cases of poisoning can result in dehydration, muscle twitching, tremors, seizures, coma and death.

Cyclamen

Cyclamen species contain cyclamine, but the highest concentration of this toxic component is typically located in the root portion of the plant. If consumed, *Cyclamen* can produce significant gastrointestinal irritation, including intense vomiting. Fatalities have also been reported in some cases.

Kalanchoe

This plant contains components that can produce gastrointestinal irritation, as well as those that are toxic to the heart, and can seriously affect cardiac rhythm and rate.

Yew

Taxus spp. contains a toxic component known as taxine, which causes central nervous system effects such as trembling, incoordination, and difficulty breathing. It can also cause significant gastrointestinal irritation and cardiac failure, which can result in death.

Amaryllis

Common garden plants popular around Easter, *Amaryllis* species contain toxins that can cause vomiting, depression, diarrhea, abdominal pain, hypersalivation, anorexia and tremors.

Autumn Crocus

Ingestion of *Colchicum autumnale* by pets can result in oral irritation, bloody vomiting, diarrhea, shock, multi-organ damage and bone marrow suppression.

Chrysanthemum

These popular blooms are part of the *Compositae* family, which contain pyrethrins that may

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produce gastrointestinal upset, including drooling, vomiting and diarrhea, if eaten. In certain cases depression and loss of coordination may also develop if enough of any part of the plant is consumed.

English Ivy

Also called branching ivy, glacier ivy, needlepoint ivy, sweetheart ivy and California ivy, *Hedera helix* contains triterpenoid saponins that, should pets ingest, can result in vomiting, abdominal pain, hypersalivation and diarrhea.

Peace Lily (AKA Mauna Loa Peace Lily)

Spathiphyllum contains calcium oxalate crystals that can cause oral irritation, excessive drooling, vomiting, difficulty in swallowing and intense burning and irritation of the mouth, lips and tongue in pets who ingest.

Pothos

Pothos (both *Scindapsus* and *Epipremnum*) belongs to the Araceae family. If chewed or ingested, this popular household plant can cause significant mechanical irritation and swelling of the oral tissues and other parts of the gastrointestinal tract.

Schefflera

Schefflera and *Brassaia actinophylla* contain calcium oxalate crystals that can cause oral irritation, excessive drooling, vomiting, difficulty in swallowing and intense burning and irritation of the mouth, lips and tongue in pets who ingest.

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Top 10 Human Medications That Poison Our Pets

Although pet parents are well aware of poisons lurking around their home, many don't realize that some of the biggest culprits are sitting right on their own nightstands. In 2007, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center received 89,000 calls related to pets ingesting over-the-counter and prescription medications. To help you prevent an accident from happening, our experts have created a list of the top 10 human medications that most often poison our furry friends.



If you suspect your pet has ingested any of the following items, please call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center's 24-hour hotline at (888) 426-4435. And remember to keep all medications tucked away in bathroom cabinets—and far from curious cats and dogs.

NSAIDs

NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) like ibuprofen or naproxen are the most common cause of pet poisoning in small animals, and can cause serious problems even in minimal doses. Pets are extremely sensitive to their effects, and may experience stomach and intestinal ulcers and—in the case of cats—kidney damage.

Antidepressants

Antidepressants can cause vomiting and lethargy and certain types can lead to serotonin syndrome—a condition marked by agitation, elevated body temperature, heart rate and blood pressure, disorientation, vocalization, tremors and seizures.

Acetaminophen

Cats are especially sensitive to acetaminophen, which can damage red blood cells and interfere with their ability to transport oxygen. In dogs, it can cause liver damage and, at higher doses, red blood cell damage.

Methylphenidate (for ADHD)

Medications used to treat ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) in people act as stimulants in pets and can dangerously elevate heart rates, blood pressure and body temperature, as well as cause seizures.

Fluorouracil

Fluorouracil—an anti-cancer drug—is used topically to treat minor skin cancers and solar keratitis in humans. It has proven to be rapidly fatal to dogs, causing severe vomiting, seizures and cardiac arrest even in those who've chewed on discarded cotton swabs used to apply the medication.

Isoniazid

Often the first line of defense against tuberculosis, isoniazid is particularly toxic for dogs because they don't metabolize it as well as other species. It can cause a rapid onset of severe seizures that may ultimately result in death.

Pseudoephedrine

Pseudoephedrine is a popular decongestant in many cold and sinus products, and acts like a stimulant if accidentally ingested by pets. In cats and dogs, it causes elevated heart rates, blood pressure and body temperature as well as seizures.

Anti-diabetics

Many oral diabetes treatments—including glipizide and glyburide—can cause a major drop in blood sugar levels of affected pets. Clinical signs of ingestion include disorientation, lack of coordination and seizures.

Vitamin D derivatives

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Even small exposures to Vitamin D analogues like calcipotriene and calcitriol can cause life-threatening spikes in blood calcium levels in pets. Clinical signs of exposure—including vomiting, loss of appetite, increased urination and thirst due to kidney failure—often don't occur for more than 24 hours after ingestion.

Baclofen

Baclofen is a muscle relaxant that can impair the central nervous systems of cats and dogs. Some symptoms of ingestion include significant depression, disorientation, vocalization, seizures and coma, which can lead to death.

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Top 10 Pet Poisons of 2009 According to the ASPCA



With various dangers lurking in corners and cabinets, the home can be a minefield of poisons for our pets. In 2009, the ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) in Urbana, IL, handled more than 140,000 cases of pets exposed to toxic substances, many of which included everyday household products. Don't leave it up to Fido or Fluffy to keep themselves safe. Below is a list of the top 10 pet poisons that affected our furry friends in 2009.

Human Medications

For several years, human medications have been number one on the ASPCA's list of common hazards, and 2009 was no exception. Last year, the ASPCA managed 45,816 calls involving prescription and over-the-counter drugs such as painkillers, cold medications, antidepressants and dietary supplements. Pets often snatch pill vials from counters and nightstands or gobble up medications accidentally dropped on the floor, so it's essential to keep meds tucked away in hard-to-reach cabinets.

Insecticides

In our effort to battle home invasions by unwelcome pests, we often unwittingly put our furry friends at risk. In 2009, our toxicologists fielded 29,020 calls related to insecticides. One of the most common incidents involved the misuse of flea and tick products—such as applying the wrong topical treatment to the wrong species. Thus, it's always important to talk to your pet's veterinarian before beginning any flea and tick control program.

People Food

People food like grapes, raisins, avocado and products containing xylitol, like gum, can seriously disable our furry friends, and accounted for more than 17,453 cases in 2009. One of the worst offenders—chocolate—contains large amounts of methylxanthines, which, if ingested in significant amounts, can cause vomiting, diarrhea, panting, excessive thirst, urination, hyperactivity, and in severe cases, abnormal heart rhythm, tremors and seizures.

Plants

Common houseplants were the subject of 7,858 calls to APCC in 2009. Varieties such as azalea, rhododendron, sago palm, lilies, kalanchoe and schefflera are often found in homes and can be harmful to pets. Lilies are especially toxic to cats, and can cause life-threatening kidney failure even in small amounts.

Veterinary Medications

Even though veterinary medications are intended for pets, they're often misapplied or improperly dispensed by well-meaning pet parents. In 2009, the ASPCA managed 7,680 cases involving animal-related preparations such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, heartworm preventatives, de-wormers, antibiotics, vaccines and nutritional supplements.

Rodenticides

Last year, the ASPCA received 6,639 calls about pets who had accidentally ingested rat and mouse poisons. Many baits used to attract rodents contain inactive ingredients that are attractive to pets as well. Depending on the type of rodenticide, ingestions can lead to potentially life-threatening problems for pets including bleeding, seizures or kidney damage.

Household Cleaners

Everybody knows that household cleaning supplies can be toxic to adults and children, but few take precautions to protect their pets from common agents such as bleaches, detergents and disinfectants. Last year, the ASPCA received 4,143 calls related to household cleaners. These products, when inhaled by our furry friends, can cause serious gastrointestinal distress and irritation to the respiratory tract.

Heavy Metals

It's not too much loud music that constitutes our next pet poison offender. Instead, it's heavy metals such as lead, zinc and mercury, which accounted for 3,304 cases of pet poisonings in 2009. Lead is especially pernicious, and pets are exposed to it through many sources, including consumer products, paint chips, linoleum, and lead dust produced when surfaces in older homes are scraped or sanded.

Garden Products

It may keep your grass green, but certain types of fertilizer and garden products can cause problems for outdoor cats and dogs. Last year, the ASPCA fielded 2,329 calls related to fertilizer exposure, which can cause severe gastric upset and possibly gastrointestinal obstruction.

Chemical Hazards

In 2009, the ASPCA handled approximately 2,175 cases of pet exposure to chemical hazards. A category on the rise, chemical hazards—found in ethylene glycol antifreeze, paint thinner, drain cleaners and pool/spa chemicals—form a substantial danger to pets. Substances in this group can cause gastrointestinal upset, depression, respiratory difficulties and chemical burns.

Prevention is really key to avoiding accidental exposure, but if you suspect your pet has ingested something toxic, please contact your veterinarian or the Animal Poison Control Center's 24-hour hotline at (888) 426-4435.