

## **Preventing Pet Poisoning Emergencies**

(Adapted from Veterinary Pet Insurance)

In the event of a pet poisoning emergency remain calm. It is important to keep a level head so that you can properly assess the situation and communicate clearly with the veterinarian.

If there is a poisoning, please perform the following:

- Remove any remaining poisonous material from your pet's reach
- Gather the container or substance (if possible) to bring to the veterinary hospital
- Collect a sample of the material

If your pet has ingested something that could be harmful, the likelihood of recovery is always better when you act immediately. It's safer for your pet and less expensive to treat before your pet has developed symptoms. Decontamination (like vomiting, having their stomach pumped or administering activated charcoal) can only be performed within a small window of time.

If you suspect that your pet has ingested a poisonous substance and they are not immediately exhibiting signs of poisoning, it's still important to seek professional advice. When in doubt, call for help right away.

### **A Note About Vomiting**

Many people assume that they should induce vomiting if their pet has ingested something poisonous. However, forcing a pet to vomit could actually cause more harm or even be dangerous if done improperly or at the wrong time. Keep these guidelines in mind:

- If your pet is already showing signs of poisoning it is too late to induce vomiting
- If your pet has certain medical problems [like laryngeal paralysis or brachycephalic syndrome (ie. Bulldogs, Pugs, etc.)], inducing vomiting is not recommended and can make your pet's condition worse
- Certain toxins (like corrosive cleaners, gasoline, paint thinners, kerosene, etc) should not be brought back up.

Always seek veterinary advice before administering any kind of treatment yourself.

### **Home Remedies**

In the panic of a poisoning emergency *DO NOT GIVE* your pet kitchen staples such as milk, peanut butter, vegetable oil, or salt. None of these items should be given to a poisoned patient.

Home remedies, that seem harmless or helpful, should never be administered without veterinary advice. Pets can experience adverse reactions to even the most seemingly harmless of remedies given by the most well-intentioned owners. Contact your veterinarian first!

### **Transporting a Poisoned Pet**

Handling an ill animal requires extra precautions to ensure the safety of everyone involved. If the pet is sedated carefully transport them to your car or. It would even be best to have someone drive while you watch your pet. In rare circumstances where your pet may have ingested a specific

poison (such as gopher or mole poison), contact the veterinarian before administering first aid as these products can be harmful to people as well.

### Poisoning First Aid Kit

Have an emergency first aid kit at home in case of a poisoning emergency. Keeping these items on hand will make it easier for you to work with your veterinarian.

- Hydrogen peroxide 3% (non-expired)
- Liquid dishwashing detergent (such as Palmolive or Dawn)
- Rubber gloves
- Triple antibiotic ointment (such as Neosporin)
- Vitamin E oil or capsules
- Diphenhydramine liquid or 25mg capsules (such as Benedryl), with no other combined ingredients
- Ophthalmic solution or artificial tears, with no other combined ingredients
- Can of tuna fish, chicken broth, or some type of tasty canned pet food
- Corn syrup

### Poisonous Plants

Lovely as they are, some plants are poisonous to pets if ingested. Many plants cause toxicity in animals, but the following are some of the most common:

Autumn Crocus	Though both spring and autumn crocuses can cause poisoning in pets, the autumn crocus is much more toxic. If ingested, this plant can cause severe vomiting, gastrointestinal bleeding, liver and kidney damage and bone marrow suppression.
Azalea	Azaleas, which are in the same family as rhododendrons, can have serious effects on pets. Eating even a few leaves can result in vomiting, diarrhea and excessive drooling; without immediate veterinary attention, the pet could go into shock and seizure.
Cyclamen	If ingested, this seasonal flowering plant can result in drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, abnormal heart rhythms and seizures.
Daffodil bulbs	Ingestion of a daffodil bulb, plant or flower can cause severe vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. More rare, serious reactions include abnormal heart rate or changes in respiration.
Dieffenbachia	Popular in many homes and offices, dieffenbachia can cause intense oral irritation, drooling, nausea, vomiting and difficulty swallowing if ingested.
Hyacinth/ Tulip bulbs	Though all parts of hyacinths and tulips can cause adverse reactions if ingested, these plants contain concentrated amounts of toxin in the bulb. If ingested in large amounts, bulbs can cause severe vomiting, diarrhea and an increased heart rate.
Kalanchoe	This popular flowering succulent plant can cause vomiting, diarrhea and heart arrhythmias if ingested by pets.
Lily	Certain types of lilies - including tiger, day, Asiatic, Easter and Japanese lilies - are highly toxic to cats. Severe kidney failure can result from ingestion of even a few petals or leaves. If your cat has eaten any part of a lily, see a veterinarian immediately.
Oleander	Oleander is an outdoor shrub, popular for its evergreen qualities and delicate flowers. However, the leaves and flowers are extremely toxic if ingested and can cause severe vomiting, slow the heart rate and possibly even cause death.
Sago Palm	Very popular in warmer climates, this household and outdoor plant can be harmful to pets. If ingested, the leaves and seeds can cause vomiting, bloody stools, damage to the stomach lining, severe liver failure and, in some cases, death.

### Garden Dangers

In addition to poisonous plants, gardens can pose a number of poisoning hazards. Be a garden guardian - keep these substances away from pets.

Baits	Rodent, snail and slug bait are often used to keep pests at bay. But if ingested, these poisons are extremely harmful to pets. They are highly toxic and, without immediate veterinary attention, can be fatal. Typically, rodent baits can result in blood clotting disorders, brain swelling, kidney failure or severe gastrointestinal signs (depending on which type is used), while snail and slug baits can result in severe tremors or seizures.
Blood Meal	Used as an organic fertilizer, blood meal is flash-frozen animal blood that has been dried and ground. Unfortunately, many pets find this product very tasty and may even seek it out. If a large amount is ingested, it can cause vomiting, diarrhea and severe inflammation of the pancreas.
Bone Meal	Bone meal is an organic fertilizer made from animal bones that have been ground to a powder. The 'bone' is what makes it so palatable to dogs - but when ingested, bone meal can form a large, concrete-like obstruction in the stomach that could require surgical removal.
Insecticides	Most over-the-counter insecticides are basic gastrointestinal irritants to pets and are generally not a cause for major concern. However, some are combined with dangerous chemicals and compounds called organophosphates or carbamates, which can be harmful to pets. Ingestion of these substances can result in drooling, watery eyes, urination, defecation, seizures, difficulty breathing and even death. Immediate treatment with the antidote atropine is necessary to improve your pet's chance of survival.
Fertilizers	Many fertilizers are basic gastrointestinal irritants to pets. But if your pet has ingested any type of fertilizer, it's better to be safe than sorry - seek veterinary advice right away to make sure your pet is safe.

### Household toxins

Cleaning solutions, antifreeze, fragrance sprays, and other common household chemicals are often stored under sinks or on garage shelves where pets can gain easy access. Be sure there is adequate ventilation when using any chemicals, thoroughly wipe any spills, tightly close any bottles or containers, and stow them safely in cabinets that pets cannot pry open.

Keep the following toxic household chemicals out of reach from your pets:

- Acides (such as drain and toilet cleaners)
- Alkalis (such as ammonia, lye and some types of drain and toilet cleaners)
- Batteries
- Bleach
- Enzymatic cleaners (used for breaking down proteins and organic matter)
- Glow jewelry
- Hydrocarbons (such as gasoline and motor oil)
- Ice melt products that contain sodium or salt-like ingredients
- Liquid potpourri
- Mothballs
- Paint solvents and lacquers
- Paint balls
- Pine oil/essential oils
- Solvents (such as cleaners to remove oil, grease and grime)
- Teflon-coated cookware (birds only, an inhaled poison)

### Non-ingested poisons

Poisons aren't always ingested. Some can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin. Protect your pet by being aware of these common pet health hazards.

*Inhaled Poisons:* carbon monoxide, smoke and chemical fumes are all forms of inhaled poisons.

- > Exposure can result in coughing, disorientation or unconsciousness. If your pet has inhaled any sort of airborne toxin, remove him to fresh air immediately and contact your veterinarian.
- > Before an inhalation emergency occurs, install carbon monoxide and smoke detectors in each room of your house, and be sure to change batteries every year.
- > When using products that emit vapors - such as paint or cleaning solutions - be sure there is adequate ventilation in the room.
- > Consider learning pet CPR; ask your veterinarian or local community center if a pet first aid class is available.
- > If you have a bird, never use Teflon-coated pots and pans, as they emit PTFE fumes when overheated, which are fatal to our avian friends if inhaled. Alternative non-stick cookware options that do not contain PTFE are available.

*Absorbed Poisons:* certain poisons and toxins can enter the body through the skin. Commonly absorbed poisons include strong acids/alkalis (such as ammonia, lye, and some types of drain and toilet cleaners), and topical insecticides.

- > Examples of these can include canine spot-on flea/tick products that are applied to cats or concentrated tea tree oil applied to both dogs or cats. Signs range from skin irritation to difficulty walking/balancing, tremors, and seizures.
- > When outdoors be aware of any chemicals used by neighbors or maintenance crews, such as fertilizers or pesticides. Use soap and water to thoroughly clean your pet's belly, legs, and feet in order to get rid of any chemical residue that could be absorbed, licked, or rubbed onto bedding. Ice-melt products can be of concern in the winter. The salt crystals can stick to pet's feet and cause skin irritation and discomfort.

### **Toxic Table Scraps**

Sharing 'just a bite' of food off your plate with your pet is harmless, right? In reality many human foods can be dangerous and even deadly to dogs and cats.

Alcohol	Alcohol is absorbed rapidly into the bloodstream and affects pets quickly. Alcohol ingestion can cause dangerous drops in blood sugar, blood pressure and body temperature. Intoxicated animals can experience seizures and respiratory failure. The culprits are often products such as desserts containing alcohol or unbaked dough made with yeast.
Caffeine	Coffee, tea, energy drinks, dietary pills, stimulants (such as NoDoz) or anything else containing caffeine should never be given to your pet, as they can affect the heart, stomach, intestines and nervous system.
Chocolate	Cocoa and chocolate contain theobromine, a chemical that is highly toxic to dogs. Ingestion of small amounts can cause vomiting and diarrhea, but ingestion of larger quantities can affect heart rhythm and cause seizures.
Fatty foods	Foods that are high in fat can cause vomiting, diarrhea and severe inflammation of the pancreas in pets - especially in certain predisposed breeds like miniature schnauzers, Shetland sheepdogs and Yorkshire terriers. Fight the temptation to share these kinds of table scraps and give a healthy pet treat instead. Be warned that marrow bones have a high fat content.
Grapes, raisins, currants	Avoid the wrath of grapes - keep them away from dogs. Just a few grapes, raisins or currants can damage your dog's kidneys or even prove deadly. Even small amounts of raisins in trail mix or snack boxes can pose a problem.

### Toxic Table Scraps continued...

Macadamia nuts	Popular in many cookies and candies, macadamia nuts should never be given to pets. Lethargy, vomiting, loss of muscle control and severe inflammation of the pancreas are among the effects of macadamia nut ingestion.
Onions and garlic	Onions and garlic in any form - even powdered - can endanger your pet's health. Ingestion of small amounts can result in a mild gastrointestinal upset, while larger amounts can cause severe anemia, particularly with long-term ingestion (like sprinkling in your pet's food).
Salt	Believe it or not, common table salt is poisonous to your pet - but it's not usually from table scraps. The source is often what surprises pet owners: Pets often experience salt toxicity as a result of eating homemade play dough, swallowing too much ocean salt water or ingesting paint balls. Salt toxicity can be severe and results in neurologic signs such as incoordination, seizures and brain swelling, and needs to be treated carefully by a veterinarian.
Sweeteners	Many sugarless gums, candies, multivitamins, baked goods and even some peanut butters contain xylitol, a natural sweetener that is acutely toxic to dogs. Ingestion can cause vomiting, weakness, a life-threatening drop in blood sugar, loss of muscle control, seizures and liver failure.
Yeast dough	Unbaked dough that contains yeast can expand in your pet's stomach or intestines. As the yeast ferments, it releases gases, resulting in nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and even life-threatening bloat and a twisted stomach. Some yeast dough also ferments in alcohol, which contributes to signs of lethargy and alcohol toxicity.

### Medications

Whether your pet overdoses on, has an adverse reaction to, or accidentally ingests medication, drug toxicity is a serious matter. Human and pet medications both pose risk to pets.

*Human medications:* many pets can't seem to resist human medications that have been flavored to be more palatable. Medications like candy-coated pain relievers, chocolate-flavored vitamins, or sweetened cough syrups can be irresistible to pets. Be sure to keep these kinds of drugs safely out of reach.

Never give your pet human pain relievers - in brand name form or generics - like acetaminophen (Tylenol, Excedrin) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications like aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil), or naproxen (Aleve). Pets do not metabolize these drugs like humans do and liver and kidney failure can result, putting your pet's life at risk. Always read your pet's medication bottle or label carefully. One of the most common accidental pet overdoses occurs when the pet owners place their own medication on the counter with their pet's medication. Inadvertent administration of human drugs to your pet can easily be avoided by keeping them in separate locations and by dosing carefully. Take extra precautions to ensure that all medications stay out of your pet's reach.

Make sure to store medication bottles in secure and high up locations. Even child-proof caps aren't dog-proof due to those sharp teeth. Finally, make sure to properly dispose of expired medication.

*Pet Medications:* accidental administration of a dog topical flea product onto a cat can result in life-threatening seizures. Avoid this by reading the instructions carefully before applying these types of products.

Never split medications or doses without talking to your veterinarian first. Buying a topical flea ointment for larger dogs and splitting the dose for two smaller dogs is never advised and can result in accidental overdoses. Also, don't reuse medications to other pets in the household.

Rarely, drug reactions can occur even with the appropriate dosing and administration. If you ever notice any problems, contact your veterinarian or the drug company immediately to find out how best to treat the reaction.

**Pet-Proof Your Home**

With a little extra effort, you can easily poison-proof your home. These simple tips can help protect your pet and avoid poisoning emergencies.

- Cover trash bins - or better yet, store them in a pantry or closet
- Fence off compost bins - for the sake of your pet and the wildlife
- Install baby locks on cabinets that house cleaning solutions
- Store medications in secure, elevated cabinets
- Don't store pills in plastic zipper bags or weekly pill storage containers as these are easy for dogs to chew through
- Close toilet lids, especially if you use automatic or clip-on toilet bowl cleaners
- Check [petpoisonhelpline.com/poisons/](http://petpoisonhelpline.com/poisons/) before purchasing plants for your home or yard to ensure that you have non-toxic plants in your household
- Wipe down your pet's belly, legs and paws after being outdoors - particularly in the winter, when ice melters are on the road
- Keep your purse (and its contents, like xylitol gum, asthma inhalers and drug containers) out of your pet's reach
- Double check the pills you're about to administer to your pet and yourself. Often owners mix the two by accident
- Don't leave pills out, even for a few seconds, as your pet could knock them off the counter and ingest them quickly
- Consider pet insurance so you are prepared for the unexpected

**Top Ten Toxins and Poisons**

Dogs	Cats
1) Chocolate	1) Topical spot-on insecticides
2) Mouse and rat poisons (rodenticides)	2) Household cleaners
3) Vitamins and minerals (ie. vitamin D, iron)	3) Antidepressants
4) Human and veterinary pain relievers	4) Lilies
5) Heart medications (ie. beta blockers)	5) Insoluble oxalate plants (dieffenbachia, etc)
6) Cold and allergy medications	6) Human and veterinary pain relievers
7) Antidepressants	7) Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
8) Xylitol	8) Glow sticks
9) Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	9) ADD/ADHD medications
10) Caffeine pills	10) Mouse and rat poisons (rodenticides)