

Poisoning



A poison is any substance (a solid, liquid, or a gas) which can cause damage if it enters the body in sufficient quantities.

A poison can be swallowed, breathed in, absorbed through the skin or injected.

Some poisons cause an all over reaction: and can result in seizures, blurred vision, acute anaphylaxis and can be fatal – be cautious and always get your dog quickly seen by a Vet

Many foods eaten regularly by humans, can be extremely dangerous to dogs. Know the most common ones and keep them well out of reach and inaccessible to your pet.

Be aware that some substances have a delayed response in animals and they may not show signs of poisoning for hours or even days after they have eaten them.

If you suspect that your pet has eaten something not meant for them, always consult your Vet immediately for advice. Do not wait for symptoms.

Prevention



The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals **RSPCA** has some very useful advice on what to do if you suspect your dog is poisoned.

Keep dangerous substances out of reach

Keep all potentially harmful substances out of reach of your pets and ideally in a locked cupboard. This includes; sweets, dishwasher tablets, grapes and raisins, medicines – in particular Ibuprofen and any other sugar coated pills, alcohol, cosmetics, DIY, cleaning and gardening products

Mindful about substances

Ensure that visitors understand how important it is not to leave potentially hazardous substances within reach – **the contents of many hand bags could be lethal to animals!**

Often visitors bring edible gifts such as chocolates and biscuits; dogs can swiftly get through packaging.

Use original containers

Never decant medication or other products into different containers, always use the original containers, clearly labelled, with childproof / pet proof lids if possible

Batteries

Keep batteries out of reach of dogs and small children and ensure that batteries in children's toys are firmly secured.

Check smoke alarms regularly

Fit carbon monoxide alarms and have appliances and alarms regularly checked. Pets and humans will both be adversely affected by Carbon Monoxide.

Harmful plants

Be aware of harmful plants – many decorative plants (particularly berry bearing Christmas plants) are toxic. Plants can be checked through the Royal Horticultural Society rhs.org.uk or by asking your local florist or horticultural nursery.

Many human foods can be lethal to your pet

Chocolate, grapes, raisins, onions, artificial sweeteners and diet foods containing Xylitol are all potentially lethal to your pet.

Ensure your pet is unable to access your rubbish / left overs, that could easily contain any of these foodstuffs.

Avoid your pet drinking from puddles that could be contaminated by Antifreeze.

Antifreeze (Ethylene Glycol) is sweet and they love it – however unless they are treated by the Vet immediately, it can prove lethal.

Conkers and acorns can make your dog seriously ill.

Rock salt is poisonous to your pet, they usually make themselves ill by licking it from their paws when they get in from a walk – to prevent this, in winter time, always rinse and wipe their paws when they get home from their walk.

Be extremely careful that your dog does not ingest slug and snail pellets (containing Metaldehyde) and rat poison. If they eat something that has been poisoned, they will be affected by the poison too. Eating slug and snail pellets is one of the most frequent causes of poisoning death in pets.

Common poisons for dogs – Human foods

There are many substances commonly available in the human world that can prove lethal to your pet.

Always contact your Vet immediately if you suspect that your pet has ingested anything that could do them harm.

Never watch and wait, many symptoms can take hours or days to manifest and by that time it could be too late.

Chocolate



Chocolate contains a stimulant called Theobromine (similar to caffeine) that is poisonous to dogs. The amount of Theobromine differs in the different types of chocolate (dark chocolate has the most in it and white chocolate has very little).

What does Theobromine do and what symptoms will I see?

Theobromine mainly affects the heart, central nervous system and kidneys.

Symptoms will occur from 4-24 hours after your dog has eaten chocolate and will vary depending on the amount of chocolate (Theobromine) your dog has eaten.

If your dog has eaten chocolate, you may see the following symptoms, your dog is likely to have worse symptoms the more chocolate they have eaten and eating large amounts can prove fatal:

- Vomiting (possibly including blood)
- Diarrhoea
- Hyperactivity and restlessness
- Rapid breathing
- Muscle twitching
- Increased heart rate
- Seizures / fitting

If your dog has eaten any chocolate contact your Vet as quickly as possible with as much information as you can about how much they have eaten and the type of chocolate consumed. Preserve wrappers and remains of the chocolate and take them with you to the Surgery.

There is no antidote to Theobromine. In most cases your vet will initially make your dog vomit, wash out their stomach and then feed them activated charcoal to absorb any Theobromine left in the intestine.

(Please note that not all pets react to poisons in the same way and some appear to tolerate grapes, raisins and chocolate with no apparent ill- effects – there is no way to predict the effect these foods will have on your dog and so it is always best to avoid them)

Onions

Onions are toxic to dogs and cats. Worryingly signs of poisoning occur a few days after consumption and so you may not be immediately aware of what is making your pet ill.

All forms of onion will make your pet ill including; dried / dehydrated, raw and cooked, so be particularly careful when disposing of left overs such as pizzas, Chinese and Indian food and even baby food often contains puréed onion.

The onion family causes gastrointestinal upset and may result in red blood cell damage, you should be particularly careful to keep these out of animal's reach.

Grapes and raisins

These fruits can be extremely dangerous to dogs and the signs and symptoms may not become apparent for up to 5 days after consumption. Grapes and raising can cause kidney failure and are extremely dangerous to your pets. Contact your Vet if you suspect they have eaten them, even if your Pet seems fine.

(Please note that not all pets react the same way and some appear to tolerate grapes, raisins and chocolate with no apparent ill- effects – there is no way to predict the effect these foods will have on your dog and so it is always best to avoid them)

Macadamia nuts

Macadamia nuts cause dogs to experience weakness, depression, tremors, vomiting and reduces their ability to maintain their body temperature and they may overheat. Symptoms typically last for approximately 12 to 48 hours – contact a Vet for further advice.

Alcohol

Alcohol is significantly more toxic to dogs than to humans and may cause vomiting, diarrhoea, decreased coordination, depression of the central nervous system, shaking, difficulty breathing, abnormal blood acidity, coma and even death.

Caffeine

Dogs are more sensitive to the effects of caffeine than people and large quantities can cause similar problems to chocolate toxicity

Corn on the cob and sweetcorn

Dogs are unable to easily digest corn on the cob and it often results in gastrointestinal blockage and causes constipation, vomiting and can make them very ill.

Xylitol

Xylitol is an artificial sweetener found in many foods such as sugar free gum, diabetic cakes and diet foods. This substance causes many animals to release insulin which can cause a potentially fatal lowering of their blood sugar (hypoglycaemia). Symptoms include lethargy, vomiting and loss of coordination, an inability to stand and seizures. Xylitol has also been linked to fatal acute liver disease and blood clotting disorders in dogs. Even very small amounts can be extremely dangerous so contact your Vet immediately if worried.

Bones

Cooked bones are particularly dangerous for dogs as the bones become brittle and can splinter causing choking or possibly puncturing further down the digestive tract. Small bones can get stuck in their bowel and often cause constipation.

Avocado

Avocados contain a substance called Persin contained in avocados which can cause vomiting and diarrhoea in dogs.

Milk

Milk and milk products can cause diarrhoea in d as they struggle to break down lactose in milk.

Ibuprofen

Sugar coated Ibuprofen tablets are very appealing to dogs – if you suspect they have eaten them you need to get immediate veterinary help. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhoea, bleeding from the gut, stomach ulceration and kidney failure.

Tip : Always take the packaging and remains with you to the Vet as this will help them to estimate how much has been ingested and establish exactly what it was and if there is an antidote.

Common poisons for dogs – non-foods

There are many substances commonly available in the human world that can prove lethal to your pet.

Always contact your Vet immediately if you suspect that your pet has ingested anything that could do them harm.

Never watch and wait, many symptoms can take hours or days to manifest and by that time it could be too late.

Antifreeze

Prevent your dog from drinking from roadside puddles as these are often contaminated with antifreeze. Antifreeze (ethylene glycol) is sweet and very appealing to dogs. There is an antidote (IV ethanol!), but it needs to be given immediately otherwise the effects are likely to be fatal.

Symptoms of Antifreeze poisoning include drunken behaviour, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea, excessive urination, seizures, shaking and tremors, coma and death. It is an extremely common fatal poison.

Rock salt

Rock salt is a mixture of salt (sodium chloride) and grit, and is used to help de-ice roads in winter. Rock salt poisoning usually occurs in pets such as dogs and cats when they lick it from their paws or fur when they return home.

Eating Rock Salt results in a high blood sodium concentration which can cause thirst, vomiting and lethargy, and in severe cases: convulsions and kidney damage. Seek Veterinary advice immediately.

Mouse and rat poison that is anticoagulant (eg Warfarin) based

If a dog eats rat poison or a rat or mouse that has been poisoned using an anticoagulant rodenticide such as Warfarin they will be affected by the poison and it can make them extremely ill.

Warfarin Poisoning may cause life-threatening bleeding; effects may not appear for several days. Bleeding may be internal and is not always visible.

If caught early enough, your Vet may be able to treat them with vitamin K and they can make a full recovery. Always contact your Vet if there is a possibility they may have ingested rat poison, even if they are not as yet showing any symptoms.

Slug and Snail bait / poison

Metaldehyde is commonly found in slug/snail baits or pellets. Metaldehyde poisoning is extremely serious and is usually fatal without urgent treatment.

Dogs may initially appear unsteady on their feet and twitchy, but may rapidly deteriorate, suffering continuous seizures and difficulty breathing.

Ibuprofen

Sugar coated Ibuprofen tablets are very appealing to dogs – if you suspect they have eaten them you need to get immediate veterinary help. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhoea, bleeding from the gut, stomach ulceration and kidney failure.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D exists in many forms and is found in a variety of products and human skin creams.

Vitamin D Poisoning can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, bleeding from the gut, convulsions, abnormal heart rhythm and kidney failure. Effects may be delayed for several days and your pet may not recover.

conkers and acorns and many plants

Conkers, acorns and many common plants have the potential to make your dog extremely ill. Always contact the Vet if at all worried.

Always take the packaging and remains with you to the Vet as this will help them to estimate how much has been ingested and establish exactly what it was and if there is an antidote.