

Common Household Dangers for Pets

Many common household items can pose a threat to our animal companions—even some items specifically meant for pets could cause health problems.

To protect your pet, simply use common sense and take the same precautions you would with a child.

Although rodent poisons and insecticides are the most common sources of companion animal poisoning, the following list of less common, but potentially toxic, agents should be avoided if at all possible.

- **Antifreeze that contains ethylene glycol** has a sweet taste that attracts animals but is deadly if consumed in even small quantities; one teaspoon can kill a seven-pound cat. Look for antifreeze that contains propylene glycol, which is safe for animals if ingested in small amounts. Ethylene glycol can also be found in common household products like snow globes, so be sure to keep these things out the reach of animals.
- **Cocoa mulch** contains ingredients that can be deadly to pets if ingested. The mulch, sold in garden supply stores, has a chocolate scent that is appetizing to some animals.
- **Chemicals used on lawns and gardens**, such as fertilizer and plant food, can be easily accessible and fatal to a pet allowed in the yard unsupervised.
- **De-icing salts used to melt snow and ice** are paw irritants that can be poisonous if licked off. Paws should be washed and dried as soon as the animal comes in from the snow. Other options include doggie boots with Velcro straps to protect Fido's feet
- **Cans and garbage** can pose a danger when cats or smaller dogs attempt to lick food from a disposed can, sometimes getting their head caught inside the can. To be sure this doesn't happen, squeeze the open end of the can closed before disposing.
- **Traps and poisons** Pest control companies frequently use glue traps, live traps and poisons to kill rodents. Even if you would never use such methods to eliminate rodents, your neighbor might. Dogs and cats can be poisoned if they eat a rodent who has been killed by poison (called secondary poisoning).
- **Human medications**, such as pain killers (including aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen), cold medicines, anti-cancer drugs, anti-depressants, vitamins and diet pills can all be toxic to animals. Keep medicine containers and tubes of ointments and creams away from pets who could chew through them, and be vigilant about finding and disposing of any dropped pills.
- **Poisonous household plants**, including azalea, dieffenbachia (dumb cane), lilies, mistletoe and philodendron.
- **String, yarn, rubber bands and even dental floss** are easy to swallow and can cause intestinal blockages or strangulation.
- **Chocolate** . Though not harmful to people, chocolate products contain substances called methylxanthines that can cause vomiting in small doses, and death if ingested in larger quantities. Darker chocolate contains more of these dangerous substances than do white or milk chocolate. The amount of chocolate that could result in death depends on the type of chocolate and the size of the dog. For smaller breeds, just half an ounce of baking chocolate can be fatal, while a larger dog might survive eating 4 ounces to 8 ounces, though 8 ounces would be extremely dangerous. Coffee and caffeine have similarly dangerous chemicals.



- **Alcohol.** Symptoms of alcohol poisoning in animals are similar to those in people, and may include vomiting, breathing problems, coma and, in severe cases, death.
- **Avocado.** You might think of them as healthy, but avocados have a substance called persin that can act as a dog poison, causing vomiting and diarrhea or worse.
- **Macadamia nuts.** Dogs may suffer from a series of symptoms, including weakness, overheating, and vomiting, after consumption of macadamia nuts.
- **Grapes and raisins.** Experts aren't sure why, but these fruits can induce kidney failure in dogs. Even a small number may cause problems in some dogs.
- **Xylitol.** This sweetener is found in many products, including sugar-free gum and candy. It causes a rapid drop in blood sugar, resulting in weakness and seizures. Liver failure also has been reported in some dogs.

