

Everyday Poison Hazards

Each year, thousands of dogs and puppies are accidentally poisoned in their own homes. This most commonly happens when a dog ingests something with an appealing taste or smell (appealing to the *dog*, that is!) such as chocolate, flavored human medications, rodent baits, and other toxic items that they happen to sniff out in their daily wanderings in and around the house.

Dogs can also be exposed to **topical poisonings** when they walk through spilled chemicals or harsh cleansers, such as bleach or pine cleaner, or if a caustic substance is accidentally spilled on their fur.

Inhalation poisoning comes from exposure to carbon monoxide, smoke, fumes from chemical sprays such as pesticides, or chlorine and ammonia gas fumes from household or industrial cleansers. These are far less common than other types of poisonings, but just as serious.



Toxic Foods for Dogs to Avoid

When it comes to toxic foods, the level of danger is determined by the individual dog and the quantity consumed. Some dogs can eat an entire bag of raisins with no reaction whatsoever, while others might suffer acute kidney failure from even a modest quantity. The safest thing to do is prevent your dog from consuming any of the food items listed below.

Alcoholic Drinks

Alcohol poisoning in dogs can result in vomiting, diarrhea, clumsiness, central nervous system depression, tremors, coma, and even death. Do not leave drink glasses unattended around a curious dog, and be extra careful during parties in your home.

Avocado

The flesh, pits, and skin of avocados contain a toxin known as persin, which can cause vomiting and diarrhea in dogs. The pits are not only toxic, but they also pose a choking hazard.

Chocolate

The higher the cocoa content, the higher the risk. Baker's or dark chocolate is high, whereas milk chocolate is much lower. Ingestion of any type of chocolate, depending on the quantity consumed, can cause drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, muscle tremors, seizures, and coma. For example, a 3-ounce (85 g) chunk of dark chocolate is enough to be fatal to a 25-pound (11 kg) dog.

Coffee/Coffee Grounds

Caffeine toxicity is similar to chocolate toxicity and can cause the same serious problems.

Fruit Seeds and Pits (pips)

Apples, cherries, peaches, and similar fruits contain cyanide in their seeds, pits, leaves, and stems and can cause varying degrees of illness if consumed in moderate to large quantities. The actual fruit flesh has not been reported to cause harm. The peels, fruit, and seeds of citrus fruits such as lemons and oranges contain citric acid, limonin, and volatile oils, which can cause gastrointestinal upset, vomiting, diarrhea, and central nervous system depression if consumed in large quantities.

Garlic (large quantities)

See "Onions." While included in many dog treats and foods at safe levels, large quantities of garlic can cause a similar reaction to that of onions.

Grapes

Grapes and raisins can be highly dangerous to some dogs, although thus far the veterinary community has yet to discover exactly why. Some signs of grape poisoning are vomiting, loss of appetite, lethargy, abdominal pain, and the possibility of acute kidney failure.

High-Fat Foods

Large quantities of steak trimmings, turkey skin, bacon fat, and other high-fat foods like gravy can cause problems ranging from gastrointestinal upset to pancreatitis, a life-threatening illness. The effects can be cumulative from regular feeding, or acute from one large serving.

Hops

Ingestion of hops, found in home beer-brewing kits, can cause malignant hyperthermia—an uncontrollable fever—which can be fatal.

Macadamia Nuts

Even a few ounces (or grams) of macadamia nuts can cause vomiting, weakness, depression, tremors, and temporary paralysis of the hind legs. Symptoms usually resolve themselves in a few days, unless complicated by other pre-existing medical conditions.

Moldy Food/Trash

Moldy foods often found in trash cans can contain mycotoxins, which when consumed can cause acute vomiting, tremors, and other central nervous system disorders. Spoiled foods can also harbor harmful bacteria such as salmonella.

Onions, Chives, and Onion Powder

When onions are broken down in the digestive system, they can cause damage to red blood cells, causing anemia (low red blood cell count). Dogs that are severely affected may require blood transfusions or oxygen therapy.

Raisins (sultanas)

See "Grapes."

Salt

Salt and foods containing large quantities of salt can produce sodium poisoning, which causes vomiting, diarrhea, excessive thirst, depression, tremors, elevated body temperature, and seizures.

Tea and Tea Bags (caffeinated)

See "Chocolate" and "Coffee/Coffee Grounds."

Xylitol (a common sugar substitute)

Products such as chewing gum, mints, candy, baked goods, and diabetic products are often sweetened with xylitol, which when ingested by dogs can cause a sudden drop in blood sugar, resulting in depression, loss of coordination, and seizures. To date, there have been no reports of problems with other sweeteners.

Yeast Dough

Once ingested, uncooked yeast dough for bread, rolls, and other baked goods can literally "rise" in a dog's stomach and cause blockage in the digestive tract. In addition, as the yeast rises, the alcohol produced during the fermentation process can cause alcohol poisoning.