

Poison Control for Dog

Must-Know Facts about Canine Poisoning

Sunny had been adopted into a loving home, but her time as a stray fostered a compulsion to eat anything available. She was a real risk for canine poisoning, but her owner never thought about poison control for dogs—she was just focused on loving Sunny.

One morning, though, the 80-pound Labrador had all four paws on the kitchen countertop and her snout in a bowl of chocolate kisses. Chocolate is serious poison to dogs, so Sunny was lucky she had only consumed a few of the chocolate morsels. The dog suffered only a scolding, but a much smaller dog might have experienced rapid heartbeat, vomiting, seizures, and even death.

Each year, thousands of pets suffer and many die from ingesting common household foods and substances. Toxins that are absorbed, inhaled, or injected can also poison dogs. Knowing what, where in the body, and how much toxin is inside of Fido will determine your course of action. Your veterinarian or a hotline that specializes in poison control for dogs will need as much information as you have.

Knowing What Is Poison to Dogs

Owners have a major responsibility to provide the first line of poison control for dogs. First, examine your house and yard from your dog's point-of-view and place harmful items out of reach. If your dog is curious, install childproof locks on cabinet doors. Read labels and purchase only "pet-friendly" chemicals.

Have phone numbers for your veterinarian and a canine poisoning hotline easily accessible. Always know your pet's weight.

Determine the type of poison, how much your pet ingested, and how long ago it was ingested. Check your pet's vital signs if you know how. Some to check are temperature, heart rate, respiration, capillary refill time, and gum color. You can ask your veterinarian to show you how to do this, or you can take a canine first-aid class. Observe symptoms, like difficulty breathing, vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, and bleeding, so that you can report them to the doctor.

Read the label on the poison, then call your veterinarian or poison-control center and do as they instruct. Here are a few things they might ask you to do:

- To induce vomiting, give your pet 3% Hydrogen Peroxide (1 tablespoon per 15 pounds of the dog's body weight) with an eye dropper, syringe, or turkey baster by dribbling the liquid onto the back of his tongue or into his cheek pocket until swallowed. Collect any vomit and take it, along with the poison container and your pet, to the veterinarian or center that specialized in poison control for dogs right away.

- To dilute caustic poisons such as pine oils, detergents, bleaches, and swimming pool chemicals, feed your dog large quantities of water, milk, or egg whites. Activated charcoal (or even burned toast) may be recommended to absorb insect repellents like DEET.
- “Absorbed poisons” are substances that get on your pet’s paws and coat and are absorbed through the skin. This type of canine poisoning can happen through ingestion when the animal grooms himself. Wash the area with large quantities of water and visit your veterinarian to prevent long-term effects and discomfort. For oil-based toxins (petroleum products) use a gentle dishwashing liquid. Dust or vacuum powdery poisons away because water can activate certain toxins. If the poison is in your dog’s eye, carefully flush the eye with water or sterile saline solution.
- “Inhaled poisons” include aerosol sprays, carbon monoxide, gases, and other fumes inhaled by your pet that you may not consider poison to dogs because you use them safely on a regular basis. Quickly get the animal into fresh air and administer Rescue Breathing if necessary.
- Venom injected through insect stingers and snake fangs can poison your pet as well. For insect bites, administer 1 mg of Diphenhydramine, an antihistamine, per pound of your dog’s body weight—but do check with your veterinarian first. Applying a cold pack to the bite can alleviate swelling, but immediately seek professional medical help if you detect breathing problems. For snakebites, carry your pet if at all possible, to prevent increased circulation of venom throughout his body via walking. Get him to an animal emergency center ASAP. Even a non-poisonous snakebite could require antibiotics. Be prepared and learn how to treat for various bites if they are common in your area.

Common Household Poisons

Here’s an easy way to remember common household poisons—this mnemonic device spells out “DON’T POISON MY DOG.”

- Detergents: fabric softeners, soaps, and cleaners can all be toxic.
- Onions cause anemia.
- Nuts: macadamia nuts cause temporary paralysis in dogs.
- Theobromine, a chemical found in chocolate, cocoa mulch, cocoa powder, and baking chocolate is toxic.
- Plants, including the seeds and leaves of many fruits and vegetables (including peaches, potatoes, and tomatoes) are toxic. The five most hazardous plants are lilies, azaleas, oleander, sago palm, and castor bean. More extensive lists can be found at www.hsus.org and www.asPCA.org.
- Out in your garage: antifreeze (ethylene glycol) tempts your pets with its sweet taste – one tablespoon can be fatal. The propylene glycol version of antifreeze is safer if ingested and is available at most automotive stores. Please urge your congressman to support the Antifreeze Bittering Act of 2005, which would require a bittering agent to be added to all antifreeze

sold in the United States. To find out more, visit the Humane Society of the United States.

- Insecticides, rodent poisons, and fertilizers are all highly poisonous.
- Skin from turkey and other high fat foods can cause emergency pancreatitis.
- On your bathroom counter top: keep mouthwash, lens solutions, and denture cleaners containing boric acid out of reach.
- Nickel cadmium (found in MP3 players, cameras, and watches) and alkaline batteries can cause ulcers and even affect your dog's neurological system.
- Medications should never be given to your pet without consulting your veterinarian. Two acetaminophen tablets can kill a small dog, and aspirin is lethal to cats.
- Yeast (bread dough) expands and ferments in your pet's stomach, releasing large quantities of alcohol (another "no-no" for your pet) and possibly rupturing his stomach.
- De-icing salts irritate paws and can be poisonous if licked off.
- Out of the trash: Dogs find moldy and spoiled foods that can contain multiple toxins, including Salmonella, Streptococcus, Bacillus, Staphylococcus, and Escherichia coli (e. coli), not to mention chicken bones, alcoholic beverages, and coffee grounds, which can also be dangerous.
- Grapes and raisins contain an unknown toxin and can be fatal, although some dogs eat them with no ill effects. Those affected by these fruits may vomit before going into acute kidney failure.

Poison Control for Dogs: Important Phone Numbers

- **National Animal Poison Control Center** – (800) 548-2423
- **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** – (888) 426-4435
- **Pet Poison Helpline** – (800) 213-6680
- **Additional Poison Control Centers:**
 - 1-888-4ANI-HELP (888-426-4435)
 - (800) 222-1222

These emergency services cost approximately \$40-\$60

Canine poisoning presents a real risk of sudden fatality, but with careful prevention and quick action in an emergency, you can help keep your dog safe.

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