

National Poison Prevention Week

March 20-26



Keeping Your Pets Safe from Common Household Items

For 46 years, the third week in March has been designated as National Poison Prevention Week by U.S. Public Law 87-319. This year, it is observed March 20-26. According to the National Safety Council, thousands of lives have been saved due to physical barriers like child-resistant packaging and awareness campaigns. Likewise, in recent years, the veterinarians at Pet Poison Helpline have worked tirelessly to raise awareness about protecting our vulnerable and unknowing pets from common household items that are highly poisonous to them.

“Every year, we receive thousands of phone calls from pet owners, veterinarians and veterinary technicians about potentially poisoned pets,” said Justine Lee, DVM, DACVECC and associate director of Veterinary Services for Pet Poison Helpline. “Fifty percent of the calls are for pets that have been accidentally poisoned by something that is safe for humans, but toxic to pets. It only takes a few minutes to educate yourself on how to avoid these situations. Appropriate pet-proofing and awareness of what to do in the event of a pet poisoning situation could spare you and your pet trips to the veterinarian for expensive, but life-saving treatments.”

Below are the most common household items that are toxic to pets. Ensuring that your pet doesn't ingest them will be well worth the time and effort needed to keep them a safe distance away.

Xylitol: Many sugarless gums, including some Trident™, Orbit™, and Ice Breaker™ brands, contain xylitol, a sweetener that is toxic to dogs. Candies, mints, flavored multi-vitamins, desserts and baked goods may also be made with xylitol. Even small amounts when ingested can result in a life-threatening drop in blood sugar, or with large amounts of ingestion, liver failure. Signs of xylitol poisoning include vomiting, weakness, difficulty walking, tremors and seizures.

Human medications: Common human drugs including NSAIDs (e.g. Advil®, Aleve® and Motrin®), acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) and antidepressants (e.g. Effexor®, Cymbalta®, Prozac®) can cause serious harm to your pets when ingested. NSAIDs can cause serious stomach and intestinal ulcers as well as kidney failure. Acetaminophen can damage red blood cells in cats, limiting their ability to carry oxygen, and in dogs, it can lead to severe liver failure. Ingestion of antidepressants, which, of all human medications account for the highest number of calls to Pet Poison Helpline, can lead to neurological problems like sedation, incoordination, agitation, tremors and seizures.

Flowers: With Easter and spring right around the corner, flowers will begin to bloom. As beautiful as they are, some flowers can cause severe toxicity, or even fatalities, in animals. 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, leaves, or even the pollen. In addition, ingestion of certain spring bulbs (e.g. daffodils, tulips) can cause severe vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. More serious reactions include abnormal heart rate or changes in breathing.

Chocolate: With the Easter bunny on his way, make sure your kids hide their candy from your dog. While the occasional chocolate chip in one cookie may not be an issue, certain types of chocolate can be very toxic. Baker's chocolate and dark chocolate pose the biggest problem. The darker and more bitter the chocolate, the more dangerous it is to our pets. The chemical toxicity in chocolate is due to methylxanthines (a relative of caffeine) and results in vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, abnormal heart rhythm, seizures, and possibly death.

Fertilizers: Many fertilizers are basic gastrointestinal irritants. However, some are often combined with dangerous chemicals and compounds called organophosphates or carbamates, which can be harmful or deadly to pets. Ingestion can result in drooling, watery eyes, urination, defecation, seizures, difficulty breathing, fever and even death.

Pest Control Products: Rodent, snail and slug baits are often used to keep pests at bay. However, if ingested, these poisons are extremely harmful to pets. They are highly toxic and without immediate veterinary attention can be fatal. Rodent baits typically can result in blood clotting disorders, brain swelling or kidney failure, while snail and slug baits can result in severe tremors or seizures.

Pet Poison Helpline recently worked with VPI pet insurance to produce several videos with helpful and interesting information about keeping your pets safe from toxins inside and outside the home. They are available here: <http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/Ask-the-Vet-Videos>.

Remember that what is safe for humans isn't always safe for pets. If you think your pet has ingested something poisonous, it is always better (and less expensive) to get help immediately, rather than waiting until your pet is showing severe symptoms. Contact your veterinarian or **Pet Poison Helpline** immediately at **800-213-6680** for life-saving help. Pet Poison Helpline is the most cost-effective animal poison control center in North America charging only \$35 per call, including unlimited follow-up consultations.

Resources: Pet Poison Helpline (PPH) is an Animal Poison Control that provides treatment advice and recommendations relating to exposures to potential dangerous plants, products, medications, and substances, to veterinarians, veterinary staff and pet owners 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Please be aware there is a **\$35**/per case consultation fee. Pet Poison Helpline is located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Helpline number is **800-213-6680**. For further information regarding services, visit the PPH website at www.petpoisonhelpline.com