

The Most Common Pet Toxins from the Past Year

The following information is adapted from ASPCA poison information found at www.ASPCA.org.

The best antidote for toxicity in your pets is **awareness** and **prevention**! What are the most common toxins that your pets can get into trouble with?

1. Human medications. Almost ¼ of all calls to the ASPCA poison hotline regarded animals ingesting human medications, either by accident or by owners mistakenly administering them to their pets. The most common were actually Over-The-Counter products, such as Advil, Motrin, Aleve, or Tylenol. Other top offenders included antidepressants.
2. Insecticides. The most serious calls usually involved over-the-counter flea and tick products made for dogs which were applied to cats. Other accidents occurred if products for large dogs were applied to very small dogs, or shampoo concentrates meant to be diluted were applied straight. Just because a pet product is available without a prescription doesn't make it automatically safe. Always carefully follow labeled directions!
3. Rodenticides (Rat Poisons). Rat baits are designed to be yummy and attract rats. Unfortunately, dogs and cats are attracted to them as well. Cats can also hunt baited mice. There are various types of rat poisons that work in different ways- some can make a pet bleed out; others can cause neurological disorders or kidney failure.
4. Human foods. Foods containing the sweetener Xylitol (for example, many types of chewing gum) can affect your pet's liver and blood sugar dramatically. Other foods to watch out for include grapes (and raisins), chocolate, onions and garlic, and some types of nuts. Also, rich fatty foods may cause the pancreas to react severely, a disorder called Pancreatitis.
5. Veterinary medications. Be sure to store your pet's prescriptions in a safe place! They are often flavored to ease administration, but this can attract a pet to ingest an entire package. Common ones include arthritis and incontinence medications.
6. Household cleaners. Just as you would need to protect a toddler from those chemicals under the sink, so you would with pets. Bleaches, acids, alkalis, other detergents, battery contents, liquid potpourri – these types of substances can cause corrosive injury to the mouth and gastrointestinal tract, and harmful affects to the liver and kidneys.
7. Plants. Refer to our previous article for examples of plants which may be toxic to your pet.
8. Herbicides and other outdoor toxins such as antifreeze, fertilizer, and ice melting agents. Antifreeze spilled on a surface or left in an open container attracts pets because oftentimes it is sweet smelling. If ingested, it causes acute renal failure due to potent crystal formation in the urinary tract.

If you suspect your pet has ingested a toxin, please contact your veterinarian and/or consult a Poison Hotline such as the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (open 24 hrs) 1-888-426-4435 or the Pet Poison Helpline at 1-800-213-6680.