

## Holiday Season Safety Tips



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**Helpful hints from the ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center to keep your pet happy and healthy this holiday season.**

- **Holiday sweets with chocolate are not for pets.** Depending on the dose ingested, chocolate (bakers, semi sweet, milk and dark) can be poisonous to many animals. In general, the less sweet the chocolate, the more toxic it could be. In fact, unsweetened baking chocolate contains almost seven times more theobromine as milk chocolate. Vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, hyperactivity and increased thirst, urination and heart rate can be seen with the ingestion of as little as 1/4 ounce of baking chocolate by a 10-pound dog.
- **Keep your pet on its normal diet.** Any change of diet, even for one meal, may give your dog or cat severe indigestion and diarrhea. This is particularly true for older animals that have more delicate digestive systems and nutritional requirements. Boiled or grilled meats and fresh vegetables can be offered as a healthy alternative.
- **Don't give pets holiday leftovers and keep pets out of the garbage.** Poultry bones can splinter and cause blockages. Greasy, spicy and fatty or spoiled foods can cause stomach upset and moldy foods could cause tremors or seizures.
- **Alcohol and pets do NOT mix.** Place unattended alcoholic drinks where pets cannot reach them. If ingested, the animal could become very sick and weak and may go into a coma.
- **Keep aluminum foil and cellophane candy wrappers away from pets.** They can cause vomiting and intestinal blockage.

- **Be careful with holiday floral arrangements.** Lilies are commonly used and many varieties including Tiger, Asian, Japanese Show, Stargazer and Casa Blanca can cause kidney failure in cats. Safe alternatives can include artificial flowers made from silk or plastic.

- **Common Yuletide plants such as mistletoe and holly berries can be toxic to pets.** Should a cat or dog eat mistletoe, they could suffer gastrointestinal upset and cardiovascular problems. Holly can cause vomiting, nausea, diarrhea and lethargy if ingested.

- **Poinsettias are over rated in toxicity.** They are considered to be very low in toxicity, however, they could cause mild vomiting or nausea if ingested by your pet.

- **Christmas tree water may contain dangerous fertilizers,** which if ingested, can cause stomach upset. Stagnant tree water can also act as a breeding ground for bacteria and if ingested a pet could end up with nausea and diarrhea.

- **Decorate your tree with animal safe ornaments** such as dried non-toxic flowers, wood, fabric or pinecones. If ingested, ribbons or tinsel can become lodged in the intestines and cause intestinal obstruction. This is a very common problem with kittens.

## **HOLIDAY FOODS & BEVERAGES THAT ARE TOXIC TO PETS**

- **Alcoholic Beverages:** Alcoholic beverages can cause alcohol poisoning. If ingested, the animal could become very drunk and weak, may become severely depressed or may go into a coma.

- **Yeast Dough:** Uncooked yeast dough, if ingested (most cases are with dogs) can rise in the stomach and cause severe pain. Pets who have eaten bread dough may experience abdominal pain, bloat, vomiting, disorientation and depression. Since the breakdown product of rising dough is alcohol, it can cause an alcohol poisoning. Many cases like this require surgical removal of the dough. Even small amounts can be dangerous.

- **Chocolate (bakers, semi sweet, milk and dark):** If ingested, chocolate can cause vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, hyperactivity and increased thirst, urination and heart rate. This can be seen with the ingestion of as little as 1/4 ounce of baking chocolate by a 10-pound dog. Chocolate poisoning does not seem to be a problem in cats, although it is possible if enough would be ingested.

- **Nicotine:** Tobacco products can be fatal to dogs and cats if ingested. Signs of nicotine poisonings often develop within 15 45 minutes. Symptoms include excitation, salivation, panting, vomiting and

diarrhea. Muscle weakness, twitching, depression, coma, increased heart rate and cardiac arrest can follow.

- **Coffee (ground, beans, chocolate covered espresso beans):** Contain caffeine which is a stimulant and depending on the dose ingested, stimulation, restlessness, increased heart rate, tremors, or seizures could be seen.

- **Macadamia Nuts:** Macadamia nuts can cause muscular weakness, depression, vomiting, disorientation, tremors, abdominal pain and muscle stiffness in dogs. The effects can last 1-3 days. This has not been reported in any other species.

- **Grapes and Raisins:** The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center is aware of recent reports of dogs alleged to have developed kidney failure following ingestion of large amounts of grapes or raisins. There has also been one case of renal failure occurring in a cat who ate raisins. Veterinary toxicologists at the APCC are currently investigating these cases in an attempt to determine the causative agents or disease processes. At this time the exact role of grapes or raisins in these cases is unclear.

To reach The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center you can call 1-888-426-4435. For more information on The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center visit [www.apcc.aspca.org](http://www.apcc.aspca.org).