

# Did You Know?

## Foods and Plants Pets Should Never Eat

**This list contains foods and plants of the most frequently encountered household items that have been reported to make animals sick. Please note that the information contained on our list is not meant to be all-inclusive.**

If you believe that your animal is ill or may have ingested a poisonous substance, or if you have any further questions regarding the information contained in this handout, contact your full-service veterinarian or the National Animal Poison Control Center 24-hour emergency poison hotline at **1-888-426-4435**.



### Chocolate and Caffeine

These products all contain methylxanthines, which are found in cacao seeds and are very toxic to both cats and dogs. When ingested by pets, methylxanthines can cause vomiting and diarrhea, panting, excessive thirst and urination, hyperactivity, abnormal heart rhythm, tremors, seizures, and even death.

### Alcohol

Alcoholic beverages and food products containing alcohol can cause vomiting, diarrhea, decreased coordination, central nervous system depression, difficulty breathing, tremors, abnormal blood acidity, coma, and even death.

### Avocado

The leaves, fruit, seeds, and bark of avocados contain persin, which can cause vomiting and diarrhea in dogs. Birds and rodents are especially sensitive to avocado poisoning, and can develop congestion, difficulty breathing, and fluid accumulation around the heart. Some ingestions may even cause death.

### Macadamia Nuts

Macadamia nuts have caused weakness, depression, vomiting, tremors, and hyperthermia in dogs. Signs usually appear within 12 hours of ingestion and last approximately 12 to 48 hours.

### Grapes & Raisins

Although the toxic substance within grapes and raisins is unknown, these fruits can cause kidney failure. In pets who already have certain health problems, signs may be more dramatic. Studies have been with dogs only, but it is believed that grapes and raisins can affect cats, too.

### Peaches

Peaches are not themselves poisonous, although they can potentially cause diarrhea or loose stools. However, peach pits are much more dangerous, containing a chemical compound called cyanide. Cyanide is extremely toxic, and can result in hyperventilation, shock, coma, and even death. The seeds of peaches also have the potential to cause obstruction in the throat and intestinal tract.

### Yeast Dough

Yeast dough can rise and cause gas in an animal's digestive system. This can be painful and can even cause the stomach or intestines to rupture. Because risk diminishes after the dough is cooked and the yeast has fully risen, pets can have small bits of bread as treats. However, these treats should not constitute more than 5-10% percent of daily caloric intake.

### Raw/Undercooked Meat, Eggs, and Bones

Raw meat and raw eggs can contain bacteria such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli*. In addition, raw eggs contain an enzyme called avidin that decreases the absorption of biotin (a B vitamin), which can lead to skin and coat problems. Bones can cause obstruction of the gastrointestinal tract and/or splinter and cause lacerations of the gastrointestinal tract.

### Milk

Because pets do not possess significant amounts of lactase (the enzyme that breaks down lactose in milk), milk and other milk-based products cause them diarrhea or other digestive upset.

### Xylitol

Xylitol is used as a sweetener in many products, including gum, candy, some peanut and nut butters, baked goods, and toothpaste. It can cause insulin release in most species, which can lead to liver failure. The increase in insulin leads to hypoglycemia. Symptoms of ingestion usually appear within 15-30 minutes and initial signs of toxicosis include vomiting, lethargy, and loss of coordination. Signs can progress to leaning, reclining, and seizures. Elevated liver enzymes and liver failure can be seen within a few days.

### Onions, Garlic, Chives, and Potatoes

These pungent items can cause gastrointestinal irritation and lead to red blood cell damage. Although cats are more susceptible, dogs are also at risk if a large enough amount is consumed. Toxicity is normally diagnosed through history, clinical signs, and microscopic confirmation of Heinz bodies. An occasional low dose, such as what might be found in pet foods or treats, likely will not cause a problem, but pets should not be given large quantities of these foods. Raw potatoes are members of the *Solanaceae* family of plants, which includes the deadly Nightshade, and contain a bitter, poisonous alkaloid called Glycoalkaloid Solanine, which can cause violent lower gastrointestinal symptoms.

### Salt

Large amounts of salt can produce excessive thirst and urination, or even sodium ion poisoning in pets. Too much salt can cause vomiting, diarrhea, depression, tremors, elevated body temperature, seizures, and even death.

### Mushrooms

Mushrooms can contain toxins, which may affect multiple systems in the body, cause shock, and result in death.

### Bones from Fish

These bones can cause obstruction or laceration of the digestive system.

### Raw Fish

Eating raw fish can result in a thiamine (a B vitamin) deficiency leading to loss of appetite, seizures, and in severe cases, death. The effects can be more common if raw fish is fed regularly.

### Green Tomatoes

Green, unripe tomatoes contain a poisonous alkaloid called Glycoalkaloid Solanine (common to all members of the *Solanaceae* family of plants), which can cause violent lower gastrointestinal problems in cats. The leaves and stems of these plants are particularly toxic. Ripe tomatoes are less toxic and are generally harmless in small amounts, but see your vet if you notice your cat suffering from any gastrointestinal trouble.

### Jimson Weed

Jimson Weed is toxic to cats. Ingesting any part of the plant can cause rapid breathing, rapid pulse, dilated pupils, twitching, and diarrhea among cats. It can also lead to convulsions, coma, or death.

### Poinsettia

These plants are probably the most popular holiday plant and are easily recognizable by their large red, white, pink, or mottled leaves. These plants also contain a thick, milky, irritant sap. In general, it would take ingestion of a large amount of this plant to see possible clinical signs in your pet. Signs could include vomiting, anorexia, and depression. The symptoms are generally self-limiting and treatment is rarely needed. Your vet may recommend limiting food and water intake for one or two hours if your pet is suspected of becoming sick after ingestion of poinsettias.

### Easter Lilies

Some members of the lily family of plants can result in serious illness in cats. Specifically, Easter lilies, tiger lilies, Japanese show lilies, rubrum lilies, many lily hybrids, and day lilies have been known to cause kidney failure.

