

Surprising Household Poisons

Most people know that anything that is poisonous to us is also toxic to our pets.



However, there is an increasing number of products that are perfectly safe for humans but are known to cause illness or death in some pets. These are the most hazardous, because even the most careful people may not be aware of the danger.

Chocolate

Another article in our library discusses the problem with chocolate.

Grapes & Raisins

Grapes and raisins are considered a very healthy snack for people, and many dogs also like the sweet taste of these treats. However, for some dogs, these foods are extremely poisonous.



The ASPCA Poison Control Center tracks over 100 cases of raisin/grape toxicity per year, of which about 1/3 of the dogs become ill and about 10% die. Typically the dog will vomit within a few hours of eating the product. Within 24 hours to several days, blood chemistries will indicate damage to the kidneys. Some dogs can be saved by immediate intensive veterinary care, but some will die regardless. As little as 1 ounce of raisins or 3 ounces of grapes can poison a 22 lb. dog.

The toxic principal has not yet been identified. So far, many fertilizers, pesticides, heavy metals and fungal organisms have been ruled out as the cause of the toxicity.

Xylitol

Another toxin you may not know about is xylitol, a commonly used sugar substitute. Xylitol occurs naturally in many fruits and vegetables and is even produced by the human body during normal metabolism. It is produced commercially from plants such as birch and other hard wood trees and fibrous vegetation. You will find xylitol in foods such as chewing gum, gum drops and hard candy, and in pharmaceuticals and oral health products such as throat lozenges, cough syrups, children's chewable multivitamins, toothpastes and mouthwashes.



Xylitol is recommended instead of sugar for some diabetic people because it is thought not to require insulin to be used by the human body. Strangely, this is not the case in dogs. Shortly after ingestion of a xylitol-containing product, there is a spike of insulin release from the dog's pancreas, causing a sharp drop in the dog's blood sugar level. This results in signs such as depression, incoordination, seizures and loss of consciousness. If not treated immediately, death will occur. There is also an unproven link between xylitol and liver failure in dogs. We have seen extremely elevated liver enzymes after xylitol poisoning.

It is not known how much xylitol a dog must eat to become ill, but the amount is not large. Even products that have xylitol as a minor ingredient have been involved in some of the cases seen by the [ASPCA Poison Control Center](#). With smaller concentrations of xylitol, the onset of clinical signs could be delayed as much as 12 hours after ingestion. *If you find that your dog has eaten a product containing xylitol, call our office immediately!* Your safest course is to prevent your dog from any access to these products.