

Prevent Accidental Poisonings

Many household items can prove to be lethal to your pets -- know what they are and how to keep your animals away from them. A list of household dangers is available at the [ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center](#).

Be Careful What You Plant

Although plants provide clean air and immense beauty, many are also poisonous to pets. Plants that are not toxic to people, like the hibiscus, those in the Easter lily family, mistletoe, and Dieffenbachia may cause medical problems in pets, such as renal failure, irregular heartbeats, cardiac shock and even death. Other examples of toxic plants include azalea, oleander, castor bean, sago palm, azalea, rhododendron and Japanese yew.

If you have these plants and cannot stand the thought of giving them up, place them in an unreachable location so the animal cannot chew or dig them up.

If your pet does chew on a plant, immediately remove the plant from its mouth and rinse the mouth gently with water. Identify the plant your pet ate and call the poison center or your veterinarian. Watch for excessive or foamy salivation and changes in the skin around the mouth, eyes or paws.

People Foods, Chemicals and Medications

People often make the mistake of thinking that people food is okay for pets. Sometimes it is, and sometimes it is not. Here are some foods to avoid giving to your pets.

- Milk is not easily digested by most adult animals and can cause them to develop diarrhea.
- Bones are very dangerous. They can lodge in a dog's passageways or cut its intestines.
- Chocolate, especially baking chocolate, can be lethal and should be avoided at all times.
- Onions can destroy a dog's red blood cells, leading to anemia.
- Rich, fatty foods such as turkey skins or gravy can cause pancreatitis, and inflammation of a digestive gland, and can be very painful and serious.
- Grapes and raisins can lead to loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and acute renal failure in dogs, resulting in death.
- Coffee is also dangerous to animals. Watch out for grounds and whole beans.
- Nicotine is a stimulant that can increase the heart rate, leading to collapse, and in the worst case, death.
- Alcoholic beverages should be kept away from animals at all times.

Also, be as vigilant at poison-proofing your house for a pet as you would be for a child. Keep cleaning products in a high, closed cabinet. There should be nothing below counter level because liquid drain cleaners, as well as tub and tile cleaners, can be lethal. Also,

take precautions in the garage -- bags of insecticide and auto care liquids need to be stored high off the ground.

Another critical step in avoiding pet poisonings is to read labels. Flea control is commonly labeled specifically for dogs or cats. This is because the agents used for dogs are not safe for cats. Follow the label directions and amounts correctly.

Some pet owners may mistakenly think that the medications used to treat human symptoms will work for animals, as well. Never give your animal a human medication. Even something as simple as aspirin can be lethal to your pet. Products such as acetaminophen and any aspirin product can cause stomach bleeding in your pet. Medications such as birth control and vitamins can also cause internal bleeding.

Cats tend to be attracted to unusual flavors, so keep them away from calamine lotion, diaper rash ointments, sun block and analgesic ointments. These products contain an acid related to those in aspirin and will prove toxic if ingested.

And remember, administer only medications prescribed or approved by your veterinarian.