

Common Household Poisonings – Keeping your pet safe

Sarah Thatcher-Mason, DVM

There are many common substances in your home which can pose a significant threat to your pet. Some of them may even surprise you – read on to find out what hidden dangers could be lurking in your cabinets, on your counters, and in your drawers.

1. **Ibuprofen (Advil®):** Ibuprofen is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug that is toxic to dogs and cats in relatively small doses – one 200mg tablet can cause illness in a 10lb dog! Gastric ulcers, kidney failure and even seizures and coma can result if your pet ingests a high enough dose. Consult your veterinarian before treating your pet with any human drug!
2. **Chocolate:** Everyone's favorite indulgence is not such a treat when eaten by your dog! The toxic ingredients in chocolate can cause symptoms ranging from hyperactivity and agitation to elevated heart rate, tremors and seizures. One half of a Hershey bar (about 1½ ounces) can cause mild restlessness in a 10 lb dog, as little as ¼ to ½ ounce of a dark or baking chocolate can result in illness.
3. **Ant and Roach bait:** Bait ingredients vary widely by product and are present in such low concentrations that severe illness is not likely to occur. Mild to moderate GI upset is the most likely if eaten in great enough quantities. The greatest risk lies in the plastic or metal bait container itself – if ingested they could become lodged in your pet's digestive tract, requiring surgery to remove.
4. **Rodenticides:** Most rodent baits contain potent anticoagulants. If eaten, they can cause serious bleeding problems resulting in illness and even death. Dogs and cats who have ingested rodent bait must be treated with medication for up to one month.
5. **Glue:** While most glues (Elmer's, Super Glue) do not cause significant problems, Gorilla Glue™ will expand in the stomach and may require surgical removal.
6. **Cold Medications:** Many over-the-counter cold remedies contain a drug called pseudoephedrine. When ingested, this medication can cause agitation, restlessness, elevated blood pressure and heart rate, head bobbing and dilation of the pupils.
7. **Thyroid Medication (Synthroid®, Levothyroxine):** Synthetic thyroid hormones are used to treat thyroid disorders in people. While large quantities have to be ingested in order to be toxic, these drugs can cause hyperactivity and an elevated heart rate.
8. **Cleaning products:** Products such as bleach or ammonia are irritating to the eyes, mouth and gastrointestinal tract if swallowed. Do not force your pet to vomit if you fear they have ingested any cleaning product – the same irritating chemicals are just as irritating on the way back up as they were on the way down!
9. **Batteries:** Although batteries are small, if they spend enough time in contact with stomach acid they can leak their contents into the stomach, resulting in serious ulceration and even perforation. If you know for certain that your dog or cat has swallowed a battery, feed a large soft meal such as bread or canned food and call your veterinarian immediately. He or she can then decide if surgical removal is necessary.
10. **Fertilizers:** There are a wide variety of chemicals used in fertilizers. Signs of ingestion vary with the product ingested and can include vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy and even seizures.

Always keep potentially harmful substances out of reach of your pets. Remember that inducing vomiting is not always the best course of action, and in some cases, result in more harm than good. Consult your veterinarian if you fear that your dog or cat has ingested something that could make them sick!