

Chocolate Toxicity

During the holidays, we generally have lots of treats that our dogs would love to share. Unfortunately, some of those treats can be toxic for dogs.

Most of us know that chocolate is bad for dogs. This is because it contains theobromine, which is toxic to dogs in sufficient quantities. This is a xanthine compound in the same family of caffeine.

You can recognize that your dog has eaten a toxic dose of chocolate from the symptoms. Within the first few hours, the evidence includes vomiting, diarrhea or hyperactivity. As time passes and there's increased absorption of the toxic substance, you'll see an increase in the dog's heart rate, which can cause arrhythmia, restlessness, hyperactivity, muscle twitching, increased urination or excessive panting. This can lead to dehydration, hyperthermia, muscle tremors, seizures, coma and even death.

Different types of chocolate contain different amounts of theobromine, and so whether or not your dog has ingested a toxic amount of chocolate depends both on your dog's weight and the type and amount of chocolate ingested.

For example:

- White chocolate contains an insignificant source of methylxanthines.
- Milk Chocolate - Mild signs of toxicity can occur when 0.7 ounces per pound of body weight is ingested; severe toxicity occurs when two ounces per pound of body weight is ingested (or as little as one pound of milk chocolate for a 20-pound dog).
- Semi-Sweet Chocolate - Mild signs of toxicity can occur when 0.3 ounce per pound of body weight is ingested; severe toxicity occurs when one ounce per pound of body weight is ingested (or as little as six ounces of semi-sweet chocolate for a 20-pound dog).
- Baking Chocolate - This type of chocolate has the highest concentration of caffeine and theobromine. Therefore, as little as two small one-ounce squares of baking chocolate can be toxic to a 20-pound dog (or 0.3 ounce per pound of body weight).

If you suspect your pet has ingested chocolate contact your Vet immediately! They can help you determine the the proper treatment for your pet. Generally treatments include inducing vomiting, sometimes administering an anticonvulsant, and sometimes giving fluids.

Have a safe and happy holiday!!!