



## Poisonous Foods

There are a few foods safe for humans but poisonous to our pets. Often this is due to a difference in how each species metabolizes certain compounds in the food. Don't give the following foods to dogs and cats. For most foods, the amount your pet eats will determine how dangerous it is.

This is not a complete list and, occasionally, researchers find a new food that is a problem. Be cautious whenever giving anything besides commercial pet food to your pets and check to make sure it's safe.

### ***Avoid in Dogs and Cats***

**Onions and garlic plus their cousins, leeks and chives:** Everything in this family is poisonous to dogs and cats, and cats are more susceptible. They can cause GI problems such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. They can also damage the red blood cells and cause anemia. Signs of anemia would be pale gums, lethargy, weakness, and an increased heart rate and respiratory rate.



Signs may not show up for a few days. If your pet eats just a little, the blood cells are still being damaged but in small amounts. Your pet may not act sick. However, if your pet continues to eat it over a long period, it can then become a problem.

**Bread Dough:** Bread dough (anything with yeast) is a problem because it rises in the stomach when pets eat it. It can cause a bloated stomach. This can be a very serious condition.

The signs are vomiting, retching (but nothing comes up), a distended belly, weakness or collapse. A pet needs to see a vet immediately. Another problem dough can cause is alcohol poisoning from the fermented yeast.

**Alcohol:** Pets may accidentally get into drinks or food that contains alcohol. Fermenting bread dough can also cause alcohol poisoning. The alcohol causes your pet's blood sugar, blood pressure, and body temperature to drop to dangerous levels. He can also experience seizures or stop breathing.



**Chocolate:** Chocolate poisoning is from a compound called theobromine. Cats and dogs, unlike humans, metabolize it slowly so it builds up. This leads to an excessive amount in your pet's body and the signs that go with it. The amount and type of chocolate will determine whether your pet is poisoned or not. The darker and purer the chocolate, the more dangerous it is.

Initial signs are nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Your pet may also be hyperactive, have a fast heart rate and an abnormal heart rhythm. It can lead to pancreatitis, seizures, coma, and death. Call an animal poison control center or us if your pet has eaten chocolate to find out how serious it is.

**Caffeine:** Pets get caffeine from chocolate, drinks, and pills containing it. They will also eat coffee grounds and tea bags! Signs include hyperactivity, vomiting, an increased heart rate, and abnormal heart rhythm. Pets can also develop tremors, a high fever, seizures, and collapse or die.



**Avocado:** Avocado is not really poisonous to dogs and cats but can cause vomiting and diarrhea. If your pet swallows the pit, however, it can cause an obstruction that could be serious. Avocados are very toxic to birds.

***Avoid in Dogs***

**Grapes, raisins, currants, and grape juice:** These are toxic to dogs. There have been no reported cases of poisoning in cats. Dogs have gotten sick after eating varying amounts of grapes. It's not known if certain dogs are more susceptible or if there are other reasons why some dogs get sick and others don't. Some have gotten sick after eating small amounts.

Because of possible deadly consequences, any amount of grapes or raisins is considered serious and needs to be treated. Initial signs are vomiting, diarrhea, and not eating well. After 1-4 days, the kidneys start to shut down. You may notice increased drinking and urinating along with lethargy. If untreated, the dog will usually die.

**Macadamia nuts:** Macadamia nuts are toxic to dogs. It's usually not serious though signs can be scary. Signs will depend on how much is eaten and can include vomiting, severe lethargy, a fever, tremors and an inability to walk. All reported dogs recovered within 1-2 days even without treatment. Cats are not affected.

**Xylitol:** Xylitol is a sugar alcohol that is used as a sugar-free sweetener. It is in many products and is toxic to dogs. You can find it in gum, mints, toothpaste, food, multivitamins, and others.

It can cause serious problems depending on the amount eaten. At lower amounts, it causes the blood sugar level to drop to life-threatening levels usually within just 10-15 minutes. In larger amounts, it can cause liver failure. Signs include weakness, collapse, vomiting, tremors, seizures, coma, or death. If you think your dog has eaten any xylitol, contact a veterinarian immediately. There have been no reports of problems in cats.

***Summary***



If your pet has eaten anything, check to see if it might be toxic. In some cases, you don't want to wait until your pet is acting sick to see a veterinarian. Call an

animal poison control center or us for advice. The Pet Poison Helpline or Animal Poison Control Center websites can give you more information. Keep their phone numbers handy in case you need to reach them fast. Both centers charge a fee for you to talk with them and the Pet Poison Helpline is less expensive.

**Pet Poison Helpline.....855-764-7661**  
**ASPCA Poison Control Center.....888-462-4435**