

5 Most Harmful Substances for Pets

Our pets are curious creatures, and it's up to us as their caregivers to make sure that their curiosity doesn't cause them harm. One of the most important ways we can do this is by being aware of what substances are harmful for our pets, and then making sure we keep those poisons far out of paw's reach.

You can't expect your dog or cat to know what's good or bad to eat, so go the route of extra vigilance and either eliminate these substances from your home or, if you can't (such as in the case of medications), keep them stocked in places where there is no possibility of your pet getting near.

Here's what the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center lists as the top 5 most poisonous substances for pets:

1. Prescription medications. It should come as no surprise that human drugs top the list of harmful substances for animals. Different medications, however, differ in their degree of toxicity, with heart and ADHD medications being the most harmful.

2. Insecticides and other outdoor dangers. The toxins in lawn fertilizers, bug sprays, composts, and even flea and tick medication (if used above the recommended dosage) can all be very dangerous, and potentially lethal, to your pet. Other outdoor dangers include certain creatures—like some types of toads, insects, and snakes, as well as algae, certain plants, and pool cleaning supplies. Check out the ASPCA's Guide to Pet-Safe Gardening for tips on keeping your furry friend safe outdoors.

3. OTC medications. Just because they don't require a prescription doesn't mean that over-the-counter medications are any less harmful for your pet. Vitamins, diet pills, cough medicine, and pain killers can all be seriously dangerous if ingested. Together with prescription medications, these make up 25% of all calls to the ASPCA Poison Control Hotline.

4. "People" foods. We know it can be hard to say no to those begging eyes, but it's just not worth taking the risk when certain human foods can be so dangerous for pets. Severe issues—including death—can occur if your pet eats the wrong kind of people food so try to stay away from it altogether. The worst offenders include: Chocolate, alcohol, coffee, avocados, macadamia nuts, grapes, yeast, garlic, and onions/onion powder.

5. Household items. Keep pets far away from cleaning supplies, paint, drain cleaners, bleach, and the like, which can all be incredibly harmful if ingested. Remember that your pet can also come into contact with these substances after they are used (their mouths and noses are much closer to the ground than ours), so it's best to just switch to using pet-safe home products. Here's more info on green cleaning.

If you think your pet may have ingested a poisonous substance, seek veterinary help immediately or call a poison control professional:

Pet Poison Helpline: (800) 213-6680

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center: (888) 426-4435