

# THE USUAL SUSPECTS:

## Top 10 terrible toxins for cats and dogs

The veterinarians at Pet Poison Helpline have compiled a list of the top 10 most common poisoning cases in dogs and cats. Let's learn about these crimes of poisoning.

**In case of...** If your cat or dog shows signs of poisoning in this handout or you suspect that your pet has eaten any of these substances, you should **call or visit a veterinarian immediately.**

### Chocolate

Chocolate tops the list—and for good reason! Chocolate is prevalent in our homes, especially during holiday celebrations. Unfortunately, dogs are eager to chow down on it when the opportunity arises. Darker chocolate contains more theobromine, the toxic component, than milk chocolate and is therefore considered more dangerous to dogs. The amount of chocolate ingested in relation to the size of the dog is also key in assessing risk. Smaller ingestions can cause symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, increased thirst and hyperactivity. Larger ingestions carry risk of elevated heart rate, tremors and seizures.

### Mouse and rat poisons

Rodenticide baits placed in the home, garage and other buildings are a common source of accidental poisoning for pets. There are three main types of baits on the market: anticoagulants, bromethalin and cholecalciferol.

Anticoagulant baits interfere with the body's ability to clot the blood and can lead to signs of bleeding, decreased activity, decreased appetite, pale gums and difficulty breathing. Fortunately, these types of baits have an effective antidote.

Bromethalin rodent baits cause

swelling of the brain when ingested by pets and can lead to symptoms including lack of coordination, decreased activity, weak or wobbly gait, tremors and seizures. This type of bait has no antidote, so prompt veterinary treatment is imperative.

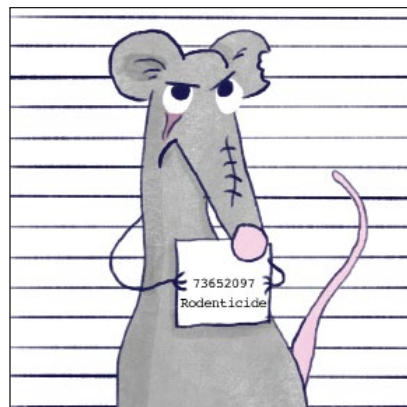
Cholecalciferol is a type of vitamin D used in rodent bait and is covered in vitamin D below.

### Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)

Ibuprofen is a popular nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication present in most homes. Ibuprofen is safely used to treat pain in people, but even one or two pills can be dangerous for pets. Cats are especially sensitive to this drug as their bodies are unable to metabolize it well. When ingested by dogs and cats, ibuprofen can cause vomiting, stomach ulcers with subsequent bleeding into the gastrointestinal tract, damage to the kidneys and, in very high doses, possibly neurologic effects like sedation and seizures.

### Xylitol

Xylitol is a type of sweetener toxic to dogs that's used in sugar-free gums and dental products, and as a sugar substitute. Dogs that ingest xylitol can develop low blood sugar and injury to the liver if enough is consumed. Symptoms





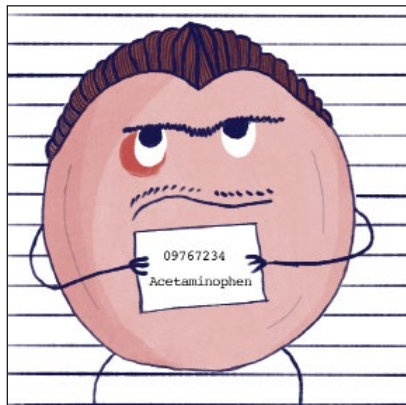
of xylitol poisoning include vomiting, weakness, uncoordinated movements and seizures. Liver damage can occur later and can lead to symptoms of decreased appetite, continued vomiting and jaundice.

### Grapes and raisins

Raisin and grape poisoning in dogs is poorly understood but can result in kidney failure. Dogs that eat toxic amounts of grapes and raisins will usually start to vomit within 24 hours of ingestion progressing to kidney damage over the next couple of days. Affected dogs can show symptoms of decreased activity and appetite, continued vomiting and changes in thirst and urination. Fortunately, dogs have a good prognosis when treated early before kidney damage occurs.

### Antidepressants (Prozac, Paxil, Effexor, Cymbalta)

Antidepressants are increasingly prescribed for behavior and anxiety issues in pets, but overdoses can lead to such serious symptoms as hyperexcitability or lethargy, disorientation, vomiting, dilated pupils, tremors, seizures and changes in heart rate and blood pressure. Depending on the specific drug and the size of the pet, even one or two pills can lead to poisoning.



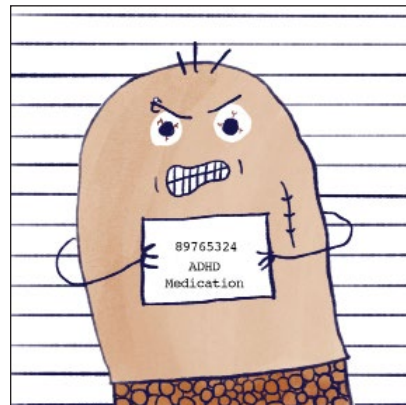
### Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Acetaminophen is a pain medication used frequently by humans, but unfortunately, this common medication can cause serious poisoning when ingested by pets. Cats are especially sensitive to acetaminophen, and ingestion of just one pill is almost always enough to cause illness.

Dogs that ingest overdoses of acetaminophen tend to develop damage to the liver, which may manifest with symptoms such as vomiting, decreased appetite and jaundice. Cats show rapid onset of symptoms, which may include decreased appetite and activity, drooling, vomiting, swelling of the face and paws, and difficulty breathing.

### Vitamin D and cholecalciferol

Human vitamin D supplements and cholecalciferol rodenticides can lead to serious poisoning when ingested in excess by pets. Overdose of vitamin D causes the blood calcium levels to rise, and if left untreated, can result in damage to organs, most commonly kidney failure. Pets that ingest overdoses of vitamin D will commonly show early vomiting, lack of appetite and later increased thirst and urination.



### Stimulant drugs (Adderall, Ritalin, Vyvanse)

Stimulant medications prescribed for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can cause serious symptoms when ingested by pets, even with ingestion of just one or two pills. Ingestion of these medications can result in hyperactivity, dilated pupils, tremors and seizures as well as elevated heart rate, blood pressure and temperature. Some of these medications are formulated to have an extended duration of effect and can lead to prolonged symptoms of poisoning in pets.

### Fertilizers

Fortunately, most ready-to-use yard and garden fertilizers are low risk when ingested by pets, especially when properly applied. Many fertilizers contain ingredients that are tasty to dogs, such as bone, blood and fish meals, and they will readily eat fertilizer if given the chance.

Vomiting and diarrhea are the most common effects. Sewage-sludge-based fertilizers, such as Milorganite, carry an increased risk of stomach upset symptoms and can also cause self-limiting muscle pain and stiffness.