



24 Hour Emergency &  
Referral Hospital

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## REHABILITATION

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# HOLIDAY TOXINS

As the holiday season approaches, having a basic awareness of the common toxins and other dangers can help to keep your pet safe during this busy time of year.

Toxin ingestion is one of the most common types of cases seen at veterinary emergency hospitals during the holidays. Chocolate toxicity may be the most well known toxin yet still remains one of the most common. Dark chocolate is significantly worse due to higher levels of theobromine but any type of chocolate is potentially serious and even fatal if ingested in high enough quantities. Cats may have less interest in eating chocolate but they are equally if not more sensitive to its toxic potential.

Other food items that are commonly ingested and toxic to pets are raisin or fruit bread (any type of raisin or grape product in dogs), macadamia nuts and sugar-free products containing Xylitol (dogs only). Every attempt should be made to keep pets away from potential exposure to alcohol and other recreational or prescription drugs.

Aside from the toxin potential, some food items also pose other hazards. Meat bones, corn cobs, large nuts and any other garbage your pet may get into commonly cause intestinal obstruction and should never be given to your animal. As well, keep in mind holiday foods are generally rich and your animal is not adjusted to eating them. Feeding these foods to your pet may be very tempting but could put them at risk of pancreatitis; a serious and potentially fatal inflammation of the pancreas often requiring intensive treatment in the hospital.

Non-food items also pose toxic threat or risk of intestinal obstruction. Liquid potpourri is a little known toxin that is potentially quite serious if ingested by animals. Child or pet toys, socks, undergarments, dish towels, blankets and balls are other common causes of intestinal obstruction particularly in dogs. It is important to remind family members who may be staying with you, and may not have animals of their own, to keep these items off the floors. Tinsel, wrapping ribbon or any type of string (dental floss) are common causes of intestinal obstruction in cats. If you ever see string coming out of the back end of your cat or dog – NEVER PULL. Call your vet for advice.

Plants are also common toxins to be aware of. Lilies (cats only), Holly, Mistletoe, Amaryllis, Poinsettias and Christmas Cactus are common at this time of year. Poinsettias and Christmas Cacti are mildly toxic with vomiting, diarrhea and mouth pain being the most likely symptoms. Holly, Mistletoe and Amaryllis are potentially quite serious and treatment by a vet is recommended.

Keeping your pet safe and out of the hospital during the holidays is easy to do with a little knowledge of the potential dangers. If you have any concerns about something your pet may have ingested or would like to know more information about those listed above please call your regular veterinarian. If it is after regular hours, the Toronto Veterinary Emergency Hospital is open 24/7, 365 days a year and is always fully staffed to answer your phone calls or see your pet in an emergency. Please contact (416) 247-8387 (VETS).

