

These Household Items Can Kill Your Pet

Common items in and around your home can kill your pets. The ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center gets hundreds of thousands of calls from panicked pet owners each year, and most cases are caused by common items.

The most common cause of pet poisoning occurs when an animal ingests a medicine intended for humans. Shockingly, the medicine is often administered by the pet's well-intentioned owner. Some animal associations say as high as 68 percent of animal poisonings are caused by human medications.

Pet's bodies metabolize substances differently from humans, and owners are unaware that even small amounts of drugs, such as over-the-counter pain relievers, overwhelm a pet's metabolism causing an overdose.

Pets also poison themselves by chewing on medicine bottles and pills accidentally dropped by their owners. "You'd be surprised how interesting, and even appetizing, your household pet may find a tablet or a pill vial," says Dr. Michelle Larsen of the Emergency Animal Clinic in Avondale, Arizona. Keep all medications beyond the reach of your pets, and be sure to find and pick up any pills you may drop.

According to ASPCA, the top five most common human medications ingested by pets are: ibuprofen, Tramadol, Alprazolam (Xanax), Adderall, and Ambien. Tylenol (acetaminophen) is particularly toxic to cats.

Other common sources of pet poisoning include:

- **Antifreeze.** Dogs and cats are attracted to the sweet taste of ethylene glycol, found in antifreeze and de-icing agents. One tablespoon can cause fatal kidney failure in dogs, and as

little as one teaspoon can be fatal for a cat. Keep an eye out for leaks from your car.

- **Plants.** Numerous common plants inside and outside are poisonous to animals, including philodendron, azalea, dieffenbachia, narcissus, oleander, rhododendrons, chrysanthemum, and mistletoe. Many types of lilies, including Tiger, Day, and Easter, are especially toxic to cats; ingesting as few as two leaves or even licking pollen from their coats can cause acute kidney failure.

- **Non-stick cookware.** Non-stick cookware, such as Teflon, is coated with poltetrafluoroethlyene (PTFE), which gives off toxic fumes when overheated. It's extremely toxic to all birds. Even small doses overwhelm their lungs, causing them to fill with liquid and killing them so quickly that owners don't have time to seek treatment. The fumes from self-cleaning ovens are also poisonous to birds.

- **Rat poison.** Even though you may try to hide rat poison in out-of-the-way places your pet can't reach, accidents happen—bait can even be moved by its intended victims—and the bait appeals to dogs as well as rats. The most common rat poisons are anticoagulants that cause massive internal bleeding and death. Other rat poisons contain cholecalciferol, which causes kidney failure, and bromethalin, which causes the brain to swell. If you use rat poison, keep the package it came in, and if your pet ingests it, take the package to your vet so your pet can receive the correct treatment.

- **Batteries.** Both dogs and cats can be sickened by batteries, causing ulcers in the mouth, esophagus, and stomach. If you notice the remote control has been chewed on, take a close look. If a battery has been punctured, acid can leak and cause severe ulceration. According to the Pet Poison Helpline, newer "disc" shaped batteries can allow an electric current to pass through the tissues of the gastrointestinal track which can even cause perforation of the mouth, esophagus, stomach, or

small intestine. Small button-shaped lithium batteries are the most dangerous. In addition, metals in the batteries can cause heavy metal toxicity.

- **Fabric softener sheets.** The same chemicals that keep clothes from sticking can kill your pet, causing pulmonary edema and kidney failure. According to the ASPCA, fabric softener sheets, especially those that haven't been used, can cause significant gastrointestinal irritation and even ulceration. While all animals can be affected, cats are particularly sensitive.

- **Pesticides and herbicides.** The Animal Poison Control Center says that 47 percent of pet poisonings during the months of June, July, and August are due to pesticides and herbicides. It doesn't take much to poison a pet—even walking on a recently treated lawn and licking its paws afterwards can be enough.

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