

TEN People Foods to Keep Away From Your Pets

We love them dearly, as family, and it is the season for sharing and baking special treats. However: Chocolate, Macadamia nuts, avocados...these foods may sound delicious to you, but are actually quite dangerous to our animal companions. Their metabolisms and enzymatic digestion is different in many ways than our own, rendering foods that are safe for us, actually toxic to our pets. Veterinary toxicologists and nutrition experts have come up with a list of top 10 people foods that you should not feed your pet. If ingestion of any of these items should occur, please note the amount ingested and contact your veterinarian immediately, or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435.

1. Chocolate, Caffeine

These products all contain substances called methylxanthines, which are found in cacao seeds, the fruit of the plant used to make coffee and in the nuts of an extract used in some sodas. When ingested by pets, methylxanthines can cause vomiting and diarrhea, panting, excessive thirst and urination, hyperactivity, abnormal heart rhythm, tremors, seizures and even death. Note that darker chocolate is more dangerous than milk chocolate. White chocolate has the lowest level of methylxanthines, while baking chocolate contains the highest.

2. Alcohol

Alcoholic beverages and food products containing alcohol can cause vomiting, diarrhea, decreased coordination, central nervous system depression, difficulty breathing, tremors, abnormal blood acidity, coma and even death.

3. Avocado

The leaves, fruit, seeds and bark of avocados contain Persin, which can cause vomiting and diarrhea in dogs. Birds and rodents are especially sensitive to avocado poisoning, and can develop congestion, difficulty breathing and fluid accumulation around the heart. Some ingestions may even be fatal.

4. Macadamia Nuts

Macadamia nuts are commonly used in many cookies and candies. However, they can cause problems for your canine companion. These nuts have caused weakness, depression, vomiting, tremors and hyperthermia in dogs. Signs usually appear within 12 hours of ingestion and last approximately 12 to 48 hours.

5. Grapes & Raisins

Although the toxic substance within grapes and raisins is unknown, these fruits can cause kidney failure. In pets who already have certain health problems, signs may be more dramatic.

6. Yeast Dough

Yeast dough can rise and cause gas to accumulate in your pet's digestive system. This can be painful and can cause the stomach or intestines to rupture. Because the risk diminishes after the dough is cooked and the yeast has fully risen, pets can have small bits of bread as treats. However, these treats should not constitute more than 5 percent to 10 percent of your pet's daily caloric intake.

7. Raw/Undercooked Meat, Eggs and Bones

Raw meat and raw eggs can contain bacteria such as Salmonella [ital] and E. coli [ital] that can be harmful to pets. In addition, raw eggs contain an enzyme called avidin that decreases the absorption of biotin (a B vitamin), which can lead to skin and coat problems. Feeding your pet raw bones may seem like a natural and healthy option that might occur if your pet lived in the wild. However, this can be very dangerous for a domestic pet, who might choke on bones, or sustain a grave injury should the bone splinter and become lodged in or puncture your pet's digestive tract.

8. Xylitol

Xylitol is used as a sweetener in many products, including gum, candy, baked goods and toothpaste. It can cause insulin release in most species, which can lead to liver failure. The increase in insulin leads to hypoglycemia (lowered sugar levels). Initial signs of toxicosis include vomiting, lethargy and loss of coordination. Signs can progress to recumbancy and seizures. Elevated liver enzymes and liver failure can be seen within a few days.

9. Onions, Garlic, Chives

These vegetables and herbs can cause gastrointestinal irritation and could lead to red blood cell damage. Although cats are more susceptible, dogs are also at risk if a large enough amount is consumed. Toxicity is normally diagnosed through history, clinical signs and microscopic confirmation of Heinz bodies. An occasional low dose, such as what might be found in pet foods or treats, likely will not cause a problem, but we recommend that you do NOT give your pets large quantities of these foods.

10. Milk

Because pets do not possess significant amounts of lactase (the enzyme that breaks down lactose in milk), milk and other milk-based products cause them diarrhea or other digestive upset.