

# People Foods to Avoid Feeding Your Pets

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

Our Animal Poison Control Center experts have put together a handy list of the top toxic people foods to avoid feeding your pet. As always, if you suspect your pet has eaten any of the following foods, please note the amount ingested and contact your veterinarian or the [ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center](#) at (888) 426-4435.

## 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. Under no circumstances should your pet be given any alcohol. If you suspect that your pet has ingested alcohol, contact your veterinarian or the [ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center](#) immediately.

## Avocado

Avocado is primarily a problem for birds, rabbits, donkeys, horses, and ruminants including sheep and goats. The biggest concern is for cardiovascular damage and death in birds and rabbits. Horses, donkeys and ruminants frequently get swollen, edematous head and neck.

## Chocolate, Coffee and 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.

## Citrus

The stems, leaves, peels, fruit and seeds of citrus plants contain varying

amounts of citric acid, essential oils that can cause irritation and possibly even central nervous system depression if ingested in significant amounts. Small doses, such as eating the fruit, are not likely to present problems beyond minor stomach upset.

#### Coconut and Coconut Oil

When ingested in small amounts, coconut and coconut-based products are not likely to cause serious harm to your pet. The flesh and milk of fresh coconuts do contain oils that may cause stomach upset, loose stools or diarrhea. Because of this, we encourage you to use caution when offering your pets these foods. Coconut water is high in potassium and should not be given to your pet.

#### Grapes and Raisins

Although the toxic substance within grapes and raisins is unknown, these fruits can cause kidney failure. Until more information is known about the toxic substance, it is best to avoid feeding grapes and raisins to dogs.

#### Macadamia Nuts

Macadamia nuts can cause weakness, depression, vomiting, tremors and hyperthermia in dogs. Signs usually appear within 12 hours of ingestion and can last approximately 24 to 48 hours.

#### Milk and Dairy

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

#### Nuts

Nuts, including almonds, pecans, and walnuts, contain high amounts of oils and fats. The fats can cause vomiting and diarrhea, and potentially pancreatitis in pets.

#### Onions, Garlic, Chives

These vegetables and herbs can cause gastrointestinal irritation and could lead to red blood cell damage and anemia. Although cats are more susceptible, dogs are also at risk if a large enough amount is consumed.

### Raw/Undercooked Meat, Eggs and Bones

Raw meat and raw eggs can contain bacteria such as Salmonella and E. coli that can be harmful to pets and humans. 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.

### Salt and Salty Snack Foods

Large amounts of salt can produce excessive thirst and urination, or even sodium ion poisoning in pets. Signs that your pet may have eaten too many salty foods include vomiting, diarrhea, depression, tremors, elevated body temperature, seizures and even death. As such, we encourage you to avoid feeding salt-heavy snacks like potato chips, pretzels, and salted popcorn to your pets.

### 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 seizures. Elevated liver enzymes and liver failure can be seen within a few days.

### 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 to bloat, and potentially twist, becoming a life threatening emergency. The yeast produce ethanol as a by-product and a dog ingesting raw bread dough can become drunk (See alcohol).