

## Death in the Kitchen

There are many human foods found in the home that could prove lethal to cats and dogs when consumed. Below is a list of some of those foods with the effects they can have if eaten – even in small quantities.

**ALCOHOL**- including beverages, cleaning alcohol and food containing alcohol. Results from consumption can include vomiting and diarrhoea, damage to the central nervous system, decreased coordination, coma and death. No form of alcohol should ever be administered to pets under any circumstances



**CHOCOLATE**- highly toxic to pets. This is because it contains something called theobromine- a substance that affect the gut, heart, kidneys and the central nervous system. It can cause vomiting and diarrhoea, excessive thirst and therefore increased urination, abnormal heart beat, tremors and seizures, panting and restlessness and death



**CAFFEINE**- can be found in a range of different food and beverage products including but not limited to coffee, tea, energy drinks, soft drink, candy and chocolate products, weight loss supplements, cacao products, coco products, to name a few. Can cause vomiting and diarrhoea, restlessness, tremors, hyperactivity, increased heart rate and abnormal rhythms, increased blood pressure, increased body temperature collapse, seizures and death



**CORN COB**- while corn itself is not toxic to pets, the cobs can be lethal. Corn cobs do not rot down, meaning when they are ingested in large pieces or even as whole corn cobs, they will not digest in the body. Unfortunately this means they travel through to the stomach and into the intestines where they get stuck and have to be surgically removed. A blockage in the intestines causes vomiting, lethargy, loss of appetite and very, very unwell animals.



**COOKED BONES**- while raw bones are good for treats and dental hygiene, cooked bones can be very dangerous. They can splinter when consumed causing



irritation and problems are they are swallowed and as they move through the gastrointestinal system. Further, cooked bones don't digest, meaning much like a corn cob, they pose as a big risk for getting stuck in the intestines if chunks are swallowed meaning surgery is needed to remove them. A blockage in the intestines causes vomiting, lethargy, loss of appetite and very, very unwell animals. Bones should always be given raw, wider than the mouth (to help prevent swallowing them whole) and should not be knuckled bones (too hard on teeth), so stick to chicken necks, lamb flaps and brisket bones depending on the size of your dog or cat.

**GARLIC/ ONIONS/ CHIVES-** Even small amounts of these herbs can cause issues in both cats and dogs. They can be harmful in all forms such as dehydrated onions, table scraps contaminated with these substances, garlic powders etc. They do not have to be in their natural form to be poisonous. They can not only cause issues in the gastrointestinal system by causing vomiting and diarrhoea, they can also damage oxygen carrying components in the red blood cells which can lead to extreme consequences including anaemia (deficiency of red blood cells or of haemoglobin in the blood) and death.



**GRAPES/RAISINS/SALTANAS/ CURRANTS-** because the exact toxic component of these fruits is yet to be identified, they should be completely avoided. Consumption can result in acute kidney failure. Other issues as a result of consumption can include vomiting and diarrhoea, muscle weakness and lethargy (flat and quiet), loss of appetite, dehydration, bad breath, ulcers in mouth, stomach pain, tremors, seizures, coma and death.



**MACADAMIA NUTS-** the reason for toxicity is currently still unknown, but ingestion can result in vomiting, tremors, depression, weakness and increased body temperature.



**MILK/ DAIRY-** almost all cats and dogs are lactose intolerant. Because they do not possess large amounts of enzymes that break down the lactose in milk (known as "Lactase") milk and other dairy products such as cheese, can lead to diarrhoea and upset tummies.



**OVER-THE-COUNTER/ PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS-** medications ranging from human pain relief i.e ibuprofen, aspirin and paracetamol to prescription medications such as antibiotics, heart medications, antidepressants, antidiabetics and more can be deadly when ingested by pets. They are human only or prescription only medications for very good reasons. Only medications prescribed to your pet should be administered to your pets. Depending on the human medication ingested, side effects to your pets can include vomiting and diarrhoea, stomach ulcers, lethargy, loss of appetite, increased or decreased heart rate, increased or decreased blood pressure, dangerous changes in levels of different chemicals in the blood, anaemia, bloody urine, breathing difficulties, increased or decreased body temperature, lack of coordination, disorientation, damage to the function of the central nervous system, dangerous changes in blood sugar levels, seizures, coma and even death.



**XYLITOL (BIRCH SUGAR)**- This is an artificial sweetener used in many foods. These can include but are not limited to baked products, chewing gum, lollies and chocolate, some brands of peanut butter and soft drink. Xylitol has the ability to cause the body to release insulin, which causes lowered sugar levels (known as hypoglycaemia) and can lead to liver failure. Signs can include vomiting, loss of coordination, lethargy and even seizures.



#### **WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PET HAS (OR MIGHT HAVE) INGESTED THESE ITEMS:**

If your pet ingests any of these things listed above, or if you have reason to believe they might have even though you haven't witnessed it, there are some very important things you need to do. These are listed below:

- Collect any packaging or left-overs from the consumed item. It is important that you are able to identify what they have gotten into and how much of it they have eaten (as accurately as possible). This helps us evaluate the level of danger they are in and how best to treat them.
- Try and figure out roughly how long ago the food has been consumed- *time is everything*- the sooner you seek veterinary attention after consumption the better the chances are of a positive outcome.
- Contact us immediately. Consumption of any of the above needs immediate veterinary attention as there is no antidote for reversal of the consumption of the things listed above, just treatment and control of symptoms associated and the sooner we can start treatment the better.