



## Common People Foods That are Harmful to Your Pet!!!!

Pets are often fed human foods as a special treat. Sometimes they choose to sample the food on their own by counter-surfing, garbage-diving, or exploring kitchen cabinets. While there are human foods that are safe for our furry family members, there are others that can make them very sick or even cause death. These are a few of the more common toxic people foods:

**Sugar-free gum/candy:** *Xylitol* is a common artificial sweetener used in many sugar-free or diabetic food products such as gum, breath mints, candies, and baked goods. It can be bought in bulk for baking at home. In dogs it causes a rapid drop in blood sugar levels which can result in weakness, vomiting, collapse, seizures, and even death. People and cats are not affected. Severe liver damage can also occur 24-48 hours after ingestion. As little as one piece of chewing gum containing *xylitol* could be a toxic dose for a 10 pound dog. As an emergency veterinarian I have seen many cases of *xylitol* toxicity. Over the last 3 years it has become much more prevalent. If your dog ingests *xylitol*, seek immediate veterinary attention.

**Grapes, raisins, and currants:** Ingestion of *grapes, raisins, or currants* can cause kidney damage or failure in dogs, cats, and ferrets, though the exact toxin is unknown. This toxicity has become more recognized in the last 8-10 years. Renal damage and failure from these fruits is idiosyncratic, (meaning not every dog or cat that ingests them will develop signs of toxicity). Since it is impossible to predict which animals will be sensitive to these foods, treatment is always recommended if a pet has been exposed. Pets that have pre-existing kidney problems can have more dramatic effects. Signs of toxicity include vomiting, abdominal pain, increased thirst, increased urination, and lethargy. If your pet may have *ingested grapes, raisins or currants* seek immediate veterinary attention. Uncooked fruits seem to be more toxic than cooked fruits. It is important to remember raisins can be in trail mix, cereal, and candy.

**Onions, garlic, leeks, and chives:** These vegetables and herbs are toxic for both dogs and cats. Toxin effects range from vomiting and diarrhea to severe hemolysis (destruction of red blood cells). A low blood sugar is rare but also possible. Hemolysis can sometimes be recognized by seeing red or orange urine, pale gums, or lethargy. The diagnosis is often made based on history of exposure and evaluation of blood and urine samples. Cats and Japanese dog breeds (Shibas, Akitas) are more susceptible to this toxin, but other dogs can be affected as well if enough is ingested. An occasional low dose such as what is found in pet foods or treats is typically not a problem, but it is not recommended to feed your pets large quantities of these foods. Garlic has been used as a home remedy for fleas, but this has been found to be ineffective and is not recommended.

**Macadamia nuts:** These nuts have been found to cause severe adverse signs in dogs. Ingestion can cause weakness, vomiting, depression, tremors, collapse, and an elevated temperature. Often weakness is noted in the back legs first, and spreads to the front legs. If your dog eats macademia nuts it is important to have him seen by your vet as soon as possible.

**Bread dough:** Uncooked homemade and store-bought bread dough that contains yeast can cause severe effects if ingested. The warm environment of a pet's stomach causes the dough to rise. This can lead to severe dilation of the stomach and intestines and even a GDV (gastric-dilatation and volvulus). As the yeast ferments, alcohol is produced and can lead to alcohol poisoning. Signs of toxicity include vomiting, retching unproductively, abdominal pain, collapse, and shock. Alcohol toxicity can present with lethargy, depression, loss of coordination, low temperature and low blood pressure, as well as respiratory suppression. Prognosis varies from very good if treated early to guarded if the signs are severe. Pets that have ingested bread dough should be seen as soon as possible by a veterinarian to start treatment.