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PEOPLE FOODS TO AVOID FEEDING YOUR PETS

Chocolate, Macadamia nuts, avocados...these foods may sound delicious to you, but they're actually quite dangerous for our animal companions. Our nutrition experts at the ASPCA 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 immediately.

Chocolate, Coffee, Caffeine

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

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.

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 lung congestion, difficulty breathing and fluid accumulation around the heart. Some ingestion may even be fatal.

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 lasts approximately 12 to 48 hours.

Grapes & Raisins

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

grapes or raisins, they should be seen by your veterinarian ASAP to begin fluid therapy and decontamination.

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. Additionally, as the yeast ferments in the stomach, sugar is converted to alcohol which can then enter the animals' blood stream.

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. 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, which might choke on bones, or sustain a grave injury should the bone splinter and become lodged in or puncture your pet's digestive tract.

Xylitol

Xylitol is used as a sweetener in many products, including gum, candy, baked goods and toothpaste. The body views xylitol the same as sugar and releases insulin in response to its presence. However, xylitol does not provide any of the calories associated with sugar, and this rise in insulin can lead to hypoglycemia (lowered sugar levels). Initial signs of ingestion include vomiting, lethargy, and loss of coordination. Signs can progress to recumbency and seizures. Elevated liver enzymes and liver failure can be seen within a few days.

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 in the red blood cells. 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.

Milk

Because pets do not possess significant amounts the enzyme that breaks down lactose in milk, milk and other milk-based products cause them diarrhea or other digestive upset. This is dose dependent, and is usually only seen with larger amounts of milk. Cow or goat milk is not an alternative for puppies or kittens, and it contains too much lactose for them and will cause them diarrhea. Commercially available milk replacers are recommended for young animals.

Salt

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. In other words, keep those salty chips to yourself!