

Important Halloween Reminder

The National Animal Poison Control Center considers chocolate toxicity to be one of the 20 most common poisonings in dogs. Dogs are particularly at risk because of their tendency to consume large amounts of unusual foods quickly. In urban centers like Manhattan, indoor dogs have more proximity to chocolate products. The toxic substance, methylxanthine alkaloids, is primarily theobromine and caffeine. Processed chocolate (used for candies and baking) contains high concentration of theobromine and caffeine which cause gastroenteric, neurologic, and cardiac signs. Vomiting and diarrhea usually occurs about 2-4 hours after ingestion. Depending on severity, this may be followed by restlessness, stiffness, excitement, seizures, and heart failure. Coma and even death may occur 12-36 hours after ingestion.

Chocolate toxicity is considered a veterinary emergency. If treated quickly enough, induced vomiting or stomach lavage could prevent the absorption of chocolate. In many cases, fluid and electrolyte therapy is necessary to treat the vomiting and diarrhea. Treatment becomes more involved depending on how much and what type of chocolate is ingested and how quickly treatment is initiated. As always, the best treatment is prevention! So warn your kids, hide your chocolate, and don't be tempted to give your trusting pets chocolate leftovers!

Dr. Deborah Sarfaty
Director of Health, Wellness, and Prevention
Biscuits & Bath