

CHOCOLATE TOXICITY IN DOGS

Chocolate can be toxic to dogs. The ingredient in chocolate that causes the toxicity is theobromine (same family as caffeine) and it can be toxic to dogs when it is ingested in sufficient quantities. The concentration of theobromine varies with the formulation of the chocolate and the good news is that it takes, on average, a fairly large amount to cause a toxic reaction.

Things like chocolate cookies, chocolate ice cream, or coated candies and fruits will be more dilute in the concentration of theobromine than milk chocolate, semisweet chocolate or baking chocolate. Using the calculation for the toxic dose in dogs, on average, the toxic amounts come out as:

Milk chocolate – 1 ounce per 1 pound body weight

Semisweet chocolate – 1 ounce per 3 pounds body weight

Baker's chocolate – 1 ounce per 9 pounds body weight.

SIGNS: Vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, restlessness, increased urination, muscle tremors and rapid heart rate will occur within 1- 4 hours of ingestion depending on the quantity ingested.

TREATMENT: There is no specific antidote for this poisoning. Treatment can include the induction of vomiting, administration of activated charcoal, administration of intravenous fluids and monitoring of heart function and treatment of arrhythmias as well as other supportive care.

PREVENTION: Dogs love chocolate as a treat and it is hard to resist the temptation when those sad puppy eyes are staring at you. The problem with feeding chocolate as a treat is that dogs will develop a liking for it and if given the chance may consume a toxic amount of chocolate if it is improperly stored. What is more appealing than a basket filled with chocolate eggs and chocolate bunnies? Please, protect your household and keep chocolate safely away from dogs and when feeding treats, chose something other than chocolate.