

The Dangers of Seasonal Food Poisonings For Dogs

By Margit Maxwell

At this time of year it is not uncommon to see lots of written reminders about keeping toxic foods away from your dogs and yet every seasonal holiday results in many dogs having to be rushed to the Emergency Vet because they were able to ingest food that could very easily kill them. Clearly, people are just not getting the message about having to take seriously the toxic nature of many traditional holiday foods that we may have in our house at this time of year.

Why are people not taking this danger more seriously?

Foods On The Counter Are Not Safe From Dogs

Just putting dangerous foods up on the counter is not enough to keep them out of Fido's mouth especially if Fido is a counter surfer or he can open the kitchen cupboard doors. Having gifts of chocolates, fruit cakes, or other seasonal baking left out is also a disaster looking for a place to happen. The ONLY way to prevent these many seasonal poisonings of dogs is for us to be aware of these foods being in our houses and paying careful attention to how and where these foods are stored.

Instead of placing non-perishable dangerous foods on the counter thinking that this is enough to keep the food out of the reach of your dog, try placing the foods into hard sided cooler with locking latch. Even if your dog follows his nose and finds his way up on the counter, the locked hard sided cooler will prevent your dog from getting into dangerous foods or any baked goods that contain raisins, currants, macadamia nuts, or nutmeg or large amounts of cinnamon.

Instead of leaving potentially dangerous foods out on the counter or table, store these foods in the refrigerator where dogs cannot access them.

Instead of leaving toxic holiday foods inside the house, try storing them in a hard sided cooler in the garage and that way even if you are not home, you know that your dog will not be able to get into these foods.

Instead of letting your dog roam around free when you have holiday guests in the house, consider crating your dog and keeping his lips busy with stuffed Kong. When guests are in your house, baked goods, cinnamon sticks in drinks, and alcohol are very easily set down on low table surfaces where dogs can ingest these foods. Prevent the problem from happening by thinking and planning ahead to keep your dog safe.

Common Holiday Foods That Pose A Danger To Your Dog

1. Grapes, Raisins, Currents

While the exact toxic compound found in the skin of these foods that is responsible for making dogs sick is not clear, it is clear that for many dogs eating these foods can lead to renal problems and sometimes even total renal failure. Exactly how much of these foods it takes to cause a problem seems to be unknown as there are many variables like the size and weight of the dog and how much of the food was consumed. If you have these foods in your house over the holidays you MUST take special care to make sure these do not end up being ingested by your dog.

Home Baked Goods That Contain Chocolate, Nutmeg, And Cinnamon

The toxic compound in chocolate is the Theobromide content of the chocolate. Dark chocolate is far more lethal to your dog than milk chocolate. So keep baking chocolate in a metal tin and well up out of your dog's reach.

Chocolate cookies should also be kept in metal cookie tins to help keep dogs safe.

Nutmeg contains a toxin called myristicin. Depending on the size of the dog and the amount of nutmeg ingested, the small amount of nutmeg used in recipes is unlikely to cause serious toxicity, just a very upset stomach. Tiny dogs may have a more serious

reaction from even small amounts of this spice due to their small body mass. Cinnamon contains a “hot” oil that could easily burn or minimally irritate the inside of your dog’s mouth if they were to chew on a cinnamon stick.

Home baked goods contain smaller amounts of these ingredients but it is still best to store baked goods in tins to keep them out of Fido’s stomach.

. Gift Boxes of Chocolates

Many people receive boxes of chocolates as gifts during the holidays and loose chocolates can be found in many candy dishes . If you have a dog, then careful consideration must be given to leaving chocolate out where dogs can eat it. Look around your home with new fresh eyes to spot where potential food dangers may be lurking for your dog.

5. The Holiday Turkey, Ham,Goose, or Duck

There are so many moments where food can be stolen off the counter or even off dinner plates. Cooked fowl bones are a hazard as they splinter. They can pierce GI tracts or even cause blockages that require emergency surgery to repair. Ham can contain a lot of salt and fat. Some hams can contain a cooked bone.

Keep dogs out of the kitchen while the holiday dinner is being served. Make sure that after dinner leftovers are immediately wrapped up and stored in the refrigerator to keep dogs from counter surfing.

Also pay attention to immediately remove the cooked bones from the trash in the house to keep dogs from getting into the trash.

6. Onions Used In Holiday Foods

Onions are commonly found in stuffing and added to many side dishes. Onions contain a substance called thiosulphate that can cause a condition called hemolytic anemia where damage occurs to red bloods cells. So make sure that you dog is not able to ingest the foods containing onion.

7. Macadamia Nuts

While some nuts are safe for dogs to eat, Macadamia nuts are NOT safe for dogs. Within 12 hours of ingestion macadamia nuts can cause dogs to experience muscle weakness, depression of the neuro system, tremors, and vomiting. So avoid leaving out mixed nuts in open dishes.

8. Alcohol

Holiday“cheer” in the form of alcoholic beverages is very common at this time of year. Unfortunately, spiked punch, egg nog, and glasses of cocktails left down by careless human beings means that dogs could very easily be ingesting alcohol. Alcohol will act on the nervous system and depending on how much alcohol was ingested or the body mass of the dog, consuming alcohol could be fatal to your dog.

The Common Symptoms Of Having Ingested A Toxic Food Substance

The generic symptoms that you can expect to see from a dog who has ingested one of the above mentioned foods is as follows:

General vomiting and/or diarrhea that begins usually within a few hours of ingesting the food;

Loss of appetite, lethargy, weakness, and unusual quietness;

Abdominal pain and adopting and highly arched back and a head hung low position;

Depending on the type of toxin, the size of the dog, and the amount of toxin ingested, there can be dehydration accompanied by small scant amounts of urine being passed, or in advanced cases, a complete cessation of urine production due to kidneys shutting down.

If You Suspect That A Toxic Food Was Ingested, Do Not Adopt A Wait And See Attitude

If you see these behaviours in your dog immediately take your dog to get emergency Vet care. Please do not wait until morning to see if the problem gets better on its own. When renal failure is occurring IMMEDIATE Vet care can mean the difference between some renal damage and the kidneys completely shutting down resulting in the death of the dog.

