

Keep your pet safe be aware of what they eat or chew

Macadamia nuts

The undisputed inventors of “puppy dog eyes,” dogs can pry the last bite of food from your hand with one mournful, glistening glance. But before you give Buster some of your prized macadamia nuts, consider the consequences.

"Macadamia nuts are toxic to dogs, although the mechanism of this toxicity is currently unknown," Goggs says. "Toxicity has been reported with relatively low-level exposure (as few as five nuts for a 44-pound dog)," resulting in weakness, depression, vomiting, lack of coordination and tremors. Fortunately, the symptoms typically resolve themselves within 48 hours.

Beyond macadamia nuts, dietary dangers abound for dogs and cats, and some foods even pose an immediate risk if ingested. According to Goggs, some common ones include: caffeine (coffee grounds, diet pills, etc.), chocolate (especially dark chocolate or high cocoa percentage baking chocolate), cough drops with menthol, grapes and raisins (dogs), tea, vitamin supplements and the artificial sweetener xylitol.

For a complete list of toxic foods for pets, visit ASPCA.org.

Lilies and certain flower bulbs

File these under the beautiful-but-deadly category. If you have a cat or dog in the house, either keep these poisonous flowers out of reach or out of the house, says the AVMA:

- Lilies: Described as “highly toxic to cats,” certain species (lilium and hemerocallis) can lead to kidney failure if ingested, even in very small amounts.
- Lily of the Valley, oleander and foxglove can cause heart problems.
- Peace lily, amaryllis, chrysanthemum, philodendron, hibiscus and hydrangea can result in intestinal distress.
- Azalea, tulip/narcissus and rhododendron bulbs can result in intestinal and heart problems, depression and even death.

Have a cat or dog who loves chewing on indoor greenery? San Filippo suggests treating plants and flowers with a nontoxic substance that tastes unappealing (try spraying plants with water and then sprinkling with cayenne pepper) or providing nontoxic plants for them to chew on — and reward them for doing so.

For a complete list of plants that are toxic and nontoxic for pets, visit ASPCA.org.

(MORE: [10 Ways You Can Help Pets in Need](#))

Wires and cords

Between smartphones, tablets, computers, Internet connections, earphones and the like, our connected lifestyle calls for a heck of a lot of wires and cords. While cords create a tripping hazard for humans, they pose a more acute risk to pets, especially sharp-toothed kittens who find cords particularly irresistible.

“Wires and cords are a household risk for pets that may lead to electrocution or electrical burns,” San Filippo says. “They can also pose a choking hazard if they become wrapped around your pet’s neck.”

To keep curious cats and dogs away from electrical wires, vets recommend first that you stow anything you can in drawers and cabinets. If wires must remain out, spray them with a nontoxic repellent spray, such as [Grannick’s Bitter Apple](#), or wrap them in [Cittercord](#), a chew-proof, citrus-scented clear plastic sheath.

Cleaning products containing bleach

While a small amount of diluted bleach, such as a few milliliters of residue in toilet water, won’t cause any damage, a small amount of concentrated bleach can be toxic.

“The degree of damage increases with dose, in this case concentration and duration of exposure [to bleach],” Goggs says. “Ingestion of only a small amount of concentrated bleach is likely to result in severe damage to the mouth, throat and food pipe. Many household cleaning products are irritating to skin and are potentially damaging if ingested or with prolonged contact.”

If bleach-cleaned surfaces near your cat or dog make you nervous, just remember this general safety rule: Make sure cleaned areas are well aired out and completely dry before letting pets back in, Goggs says. “If your pet does come into contact with a household cleaning product it is generally safe to wash the coated areas off with a mild soap and lukewarm water,” he adds.

Other dangers

The AVMA has a full [list of household dangers for pets](#), which also includes:

- Insecticide
- Rat and mouse poison
- Soaps, toothpaste and sunblock
- Liquid potpurri
- Mothballs (the naphthalene in just one mothball can cause serious damage if ingested)
- Pennies and batteries
- Car maintenance liquids
- Paints and solvents