

Halloween Dangers



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A record-setting 70 percent of Americans celebrated Halloween in 2011, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Unfortunately, it was also a very busy time at Pet Poison Helpline. During the week surrounding Halloween in 2011, call volumes increased by 21 percent, making it one of the call center's busiest weeks on record. Pet Poison Helpline is a 24-hour animal poison control service that assists pet owners, veterinarians and veterinary technicians who are treating potentially poisoned pets.



Chocolate: Of all candies, chocolate poses the biggest Halloween “threat” to dogs. Many dogs are attracted to the smell of chocolate, making it a significant threat for massive ingestion. The darker and more bitter the chocolate, the more poisonous it is. Methylxanthines are the chemicals in chocolate that are dangerous to pets, and they are more concentrated in darker chocolates. A single ounce of Baker’s chocolate can make a 50-pound dog very sick. Milk chocolate and white chocolate are less dangerous, but should still be kept out of the reach of pets. If you think your dog may have ingested chocolate, signs to watch for include vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, agitation, increased thirst, an elevated heart rate, and in severe cases, seizures.



Candy and sweets overindulgence: Candy and other sweet foods – especially those containing poisonous xylitol - can also be poisonous to pets. Large ingestions of sugary, high-fat candy and sweets can lead to pancreatitis in pets. Potentially fatal, pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas and very painful. Pet owners should be aware that clinical signs of pancreatitis may not present for several days after ingestion. Signs include a decreased appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, abdominal pain, and potentially, kidney or organ damage.



Raisins: Mini-boxes of raisins can be a healthy treat for trick-or-treaters, but they are extremely poisonous to dogs! Raisins are so dangerous that they deserve the same pet-proofing treatment as chocolate – stored in secure containers far from their reach. Dogs can experience kidney failure after ingesting very small amounts of raisins (including similar products with grapes and currants too). For this reason, any ingestion should be treated as a potential poisoning. Signs of raisin or grape poisoning include vomiting, nausea, decreased appetite, lethargy, abdominal pain, excessive or decreased thirst and urination, bad breath, and rapid onset kidney failure.



Glow sticks and glow jewelry: Due to their curious nature, cats often accidentally ingest glow sticks and jewelry because they are bright and fun to chew. While not usually life-threatening, the contents can cause mouth pain and irritation, as well as profuse drooling and foaming. If your cat chews on glow jewelry, offer a tasty snack to help remove the product from the mouth. Bathing the chemical off the fur is important too, as grooming can contribute to further poisoning.

Candy wrappers: When pets get into candy, they can eat the wrappers too. Ingestion of foil and cellophane wrappers can sometimes cause a life-threatening bowel obstruction, which may require surgery to correct. Watch for vomiting, decreased appetite, not defecating, straining to defecate, or lethargy. X-rays or even ultrasound may be necessary to diagnose this problem.



Costumes: If you put a costume on your pet, make sure it doesn't impair his vision, movement or air intake. If it has metallic beads, snaps or other small pieces, be aware that these pieces, especially those that contain zinc and lead, can result in serious poisoning if ingested. Also, before thinking about dyeing or coloring your pet's fur, consult with your veterinarian, as some products can be very harmful to pets, even if it's labeled non-toxic to humans.

Candles: Curious noses and wagging tails have a way of finding lit candles. Keep candles out of your pet's reach to prevent accidental thermal injury or burns.

This Halloween, please keep your pets safe. If you think your pet has ingested something poisonous, the veterinary and toxicology experts at Pet Poison Helpline suggest that it's always easier, less expensive, and safer for your pet to be treated earlier, versus when he's showing severe symptoms. Pet Poison Helpline is the most cost-effective animal poison control center in North America at only \$39 per call, including unlimited follow-up consultations.

Resources: Pet Poison Helpline (PPH) is an Animal Poison Control that provides treatment advice and recommendations relating to exposures to potential dangerous plants, products, medications, and substances, to veterinarians, veterinary staff and pet owners 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Please be aware there is a **\$39.00**/per case consultation fee. Pet Poison Helpline is located in Bloomington, Minnesota. The Helpline number is **800-213-6680**. For further information regarding services, visit the PPH website at www.petpoisonhelpline.com.

Pet Poison Helpline has an iPhone application with an extensive database of plants, chemicals, foods and drugs that are poisonous to pets. A powerful indexing feature allows users to search for toxins and includes full-color photos for identifying poisonous plants and substances. With a direct dial feature to Pet Poison Helpline, the app is called "**Pet Poison Help**," and is available on iTunes.