

## Keep Cats Safe From Poisons at Holidays

**Dangers in the home can be overlooked, says Pet Poison Hotline.**

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With all the human activity surrounding the holidays, pets can be overlooked and potentially in danger. Particularly hazardous during the holidays are some poisonous plants, decorations and food items.

Listed below are some hazards of which pet owners should be aware during the holidays, provided by Pet Poison Helpline:

**Bubble Lights:** These effervescent holiday ornaments may contain methylene chloride, which can result in depression, aspiration pneumonia and irritation to the eyes, skin and gastrointestinal tract.

**Tinsel:** This holiday decoration is extremely hazardous to cats, even deadly. Although it is not poisonous, it can cause severe damage to a cat's intestinal tract if swallowed. Cats run the risk of severe injury to or rupture of their intestines, which requires expensive abdominal surgery.

**Plants:** Pointsettia plants get a bad rap; they are only mildly toxic. More worrisome are lilies, holly and mistletoe. According to Dr. Ahna Brutlag, assistant director of Pet Poison Helpline, tiger, Asiatic, stargazer, Easter and day lilies are the most dangerous plants for cats. Ingesting just a couple leaves or petals can cause sudden kidney failure. Mistletoe and holly are also toxic and can cause gastrointestinal upset and heart arrhythmias.

**Alcohol:** Ingestion of alcohol can cause dangerous drops in blood sugar, blood pressure and body temperature. Intoxicated animals can experience seizures and respiratory failure. Don't forget desserts, either. Foods containing alcohol and unbaked dough that contains yeast should be kept away from pets as they may result in alcohol toxicity, vomiting, disorientation and stomach bloat.

**Holiday Foods:** It's best to stick to your pet's normal diet during the holidays, since many of the treats we humans enjoy are very dangerous for them. Chocolate and cocoa contain theobromine, which is highly toxic to cats and dogs. A little bit can result in vomiting and diarrhea, but large amounts can cause seizures and heart arrhythmias. Even the meat scraps that might seem harmless can cause severe inflammation of the pancreas, leading to abdominal pain, vomiting and bloody diarrhea, especially if they are fatty.

**Snow Globes:** Recently, imported snow globes were found to contain antifreeze (ethylene glycol). As little as one teaspoon of antifreeze when ingested by a cat or a tablespoon or two for a dog (depending on their size), can be fatal. Signs of early poisoning include acting drunk or uncoordinated, excessive thirst, and lethargy. While signs may seem to improve after eight to 12 hours, internal damage is actually worsening, and crystals develop in the kidneys resulting in acute kidney failure. Immediate treatment with an antidote is vital.

**Liquid Potpourri:** Filling your house with the smell of nutmeg or pine for the holidays may seem inviting, but if you're partial to heating your scented oils in a simmer pot, know that they can cause serious harm to your cat; even a few licks can result in severe chemical burns in the mouth, fever, difficulty breathing and tremors.

Pet Poison Helpline encourages owners whose pets have ingested something questionable to call their 24-hour hotline at 800-213-6680.