

Trash Can Be Harmful to Pets

The ASPCA warns pet owners to keep their cats and dogs out of the garbage can.

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Catching your cat in the kitchen garbage can is certainly frustrating -- and it could be harmful for your cat, warns the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Your pet can face several health threats while hunting for tidbits in the trash.

"What may appear to be a minor annoyance to many pet parents could actually pose a great risk to your pets," says Dr. Steven Hansen, board-certified veterinary toxicologist and ASPCA senior vice president. "It's important that pet parents understand and familiarize themselves with the potential dangers that can be found in everyday trash."

Some of those dangers include: **Physical Obstruction Hazards.** These include meat and poultry bones, plastic, metal and paper. These objects can cause choking, trauma to the gastrointestinal tract and even blockages. **Bacteria.** Spoiled food contains bacteria, which can lead to food poisoning or bacterial enteritis. **Toxin-Producing Molds.** Some rotting foods -- such as certain types of cheese, nuts, grains and pasta -- can host molds, some of which can produce toxins that affect the nervous system. **Poisonous Household Items.** "The main toxic hazards found in trash include medications, harmful foods such as onions and coffee grounds, poisonous plant cuttings and chemicals such as household cleaners, insecticides or batteries," says Dr. Tina Wismer, a board-certified veterinary toxicologist.

The best way to avoid potential emergency health situations is to prevent your pet from accessing the garbage. For more information, visit the ASPCA website.