

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT COMMON PET PERILS

Life is risky, and despite all your good intentions and precautions, your pet may suddenly need emergency care that you have to provide yourself--at least initially. The following are common perils that may suddenly compromise the health and well being of your dog or cat. Are you familiar with the symptoms of poisoning, and what you can do if your dog or cat swallows a toxic substance?

The following information is not intended to replace veterinary care or advice, but it may help keep your pet alive until you are able to reach a veterinarian. Always consult your veterinarian if in doubt about how to treat your pet, or when his condition appears too serious for you to handle. If you know what your pet has ingested but you're not sure if it's poisonous, call the Poison Control Center (listed in the front of most telephone directories) or your hospital emergency room and ask. The ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center hotline (which charges a \$45-per-case fee, but is available 24 hours a day) is 888-4ANI-HELP (888-426-4435).



POISONOUS PLANTS

Over 90% of the pet poisonings reported to Poison Control Centers occur at home, and about 75% of these cases involve an animal eating or drinking something he shouldn't have. About a quarter of all pets poisoned by non-drug products are poisoned by plants, but the good news is that only about 0.5% die as a result. But still, animals can get pretty sick from coming into contact with many plants.*

Many indoor and outdoor plants, even some edible ones, can be poisonous to animals if ingested in quantity or in certain forms. Wild forms of cultivated plants such as tomato, celery, carrots, lima beans, and celery contain toxic ingredients. Other plants are extremely toxic even when taken in small quantities. Typical reactions are skin or mouth rash, tongue swelling, mental disturbances, vomiting, cramps, diarrhea, tremors, organ problems, paralysis, and convulsions. Poisonous plants can adversely affect the brain, the spinal cord, the heart, the digestive tract, the nervous system, and the skin. If you have a pet that likes to chew on plants, check with your nursery, poison control center, or veterinarian to find out if the plants in your house or yard are toxic. The following is a partial listing of poisonous plants and some of their effects.

- **Aloe**
- **Amaryllis**
Amaryllis species: (Bulbs) Varied effects.
- **Andromeda Japonica**
- **Angel (or devil's) trumpet, jimsonweed, sacred datura, thornapple**
Datura species:(All parts) Depression, delirium, coma, death.
- **Apple**
Malus species: (Seeds) Digestive upset, diarrhea, vomiting; can be fatal.

- **Apricot, almond, peach, cherry, chokecherry, wild cherry, Japanese plum**
Prunus species: (Leaves, twigs, bark, pit, seeds) Vomiting, abdominal pain, or diarrhea; skin rash.
- **Arrowhead vine, Nephthytis ivy**
Syngonium podophyllum: (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Asian Lily**
- **Asparagus Fern**
- **Australian Nut**
- **Autumn Crocus**
- **Azalea**
Rhododendron species: (All parts) Nausea, difficult breathing, coma or death.
- **Bird of paradise bush, Poinciana**
Caesalpinia gilliesii: (Fruit, seeds) Vomiting, stomach pain, diarrhea.
- **Balsam pear, balsam apple, bitter cucumber or bitter melon**
Momordica charantia: (Seeds) Vomiting, abdominal pain, or diarrhea.
- **Baneberry & doll's eyes**
Actaea rubra, *A. alba* and *A. pachypods*: (All parts) Violent purgative.
- **Belladonna**
- **Bird of Paradise**
- **Bittersweet (American/European)**
- **Black locust**
Robinia species: (Leaves, seeds, bark) Vomiting, abdominal pain, or diarrhea.
- **Bleedingheart, squirrel corn, Dutchman's breeches**
Dicentra species: (Leaves, roots) Convulsions, labored breathing.
- **Boston ivy**
Parthenocissus tricuspidata: (Berries) Swollen mouth, painful tongue, sore lips.
- **Bracken fern**
Pteridium aquilinum (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Branching Ivy**
- **Buckeye**
- **Buckthorn**
Rhamnus species: (Leaves, fruit) Contains strong purgative.
- **Buddhist Pine**
- **Buttercup**
Ranunculus species: (All parts) Paralysis from large doses.
- **Caladium**
Caladium xaiitliosoma: (All parts) Vomiting, diarrhea, tongue swelling, suffocation, kidney failure, death.
- **Calla Lily**
- **Cardinal flower, Indian tobacco**
Lobelia species: (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Castor bean**
Ricinus communis: (Seed pulp) Strong purgative. Eight seeds lethal; oil is safe.
- **Ceriman**
- **Chinaberry**
Melia azedarach: (All parts) Fallen berries most poisonous. Convulsions.
- **Christmas cherry, Jerusalem cherry**
Solanum species: (Leaves, berries) Varied effects.
- **Chrysanthemum, pot, mum, spider mum**
Chrysanthemum species: (Leaves) Rash, vomiting, cramps, tremors, heart, respiratory, and/or kidney problems.
- **Clematis**
- **Cocklebur**
Xanthium species: (Seedlings) Varied effects.

- **Cordatum**
- **Coriaria**
Coriaria species: (Leaves, berries) Convulsions.
- **Corn lily, false hellebore**
Veratrum californicum: (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Corn plant**
- **Creeping fig, weeping fig**
Ficus species (Plant sap) Rash after contact with skin or mouth.
- **Crown of thorns, cypress spurge, snow-on-the-mountain**
Euphorbia species: (Leaves) Strong purgative. Rash from milky sap.
- **Cycads**
- **Cyclamen**
- **Daffodil**
- **Daphne**
Daphne species: (All parts) Mouth burning, vomiting, diarrhea, coma, death.
- **Daylily**
- **Delphinium**
Delphinium species: (All parts) Severe digestive upset, nervous excitement.
- **Dieffenbachia**
- **Dogbane (Indian hemp)**
Apocynum species: (Green parts, follicles) Raised blood pressure, gastric distress, death.
- **Dried tropical flowers:**
(Seed pods, beans) Varied effects.
- **Dumbcane, drunk cane**
Dieffenbachia sequine or picta: (Leaves, berries) Vomiting, diarrhea, tongue swelling, suffocation, kidney failure, death.
- **Easter lily**
Lilium longiflorum: (Leaves) **CATS ONLY** Can be fatal.
- **Elderberry**
- **Elephant Ears**
- **Emerald duke, heart leaf, majesty, saddle leaf, split leaf**
Philodendron species: (All parts) Swollen mouth, painful tongue, sore lips.
- **English holly**
Ilex aquifolium (Leaves, berries): Abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea.
- **Eucalyptus**
- **European bittersweet**
Solanum dulcamara: (Bark, leaves, seeds) Vomiting and diarrhea.
- **Ferns**
- **Fiddle-leaf philodendron**
- **Flax**
Linum usitatissimum: (Seed pods) Varied effects.
- **Florida Beauty**
- **Fly poison**
Amianthium muscaetoxicum: (Bulbs, leaves) Salivation, nausea, irregular breathing, death.
- **Foxglove**
Digitalis purpurea: (Leaves, seeds) Heart stimulant; overdose usually fatal.
- **Gladiolas**
- **Gold dust dracaena**
- **Golden-chain or laburnum**
Laburnum anagyroide: (Seeds) Can be fatal.
- **Golden Pothos**
- **Ground cherry**
Physalis hederifolia: (Unripe fruit) Vomiting and diarrhea.

- **Ground ivy, creeping Charlie**
Glechoma hederacea: (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Halogeton**
Halogeton glomeratus: (Leaves) Varied effects.
- **Heavenly bamboo**
- **Honeysuckle**
Lonicera species: (Berries) Varied effects.
- **Horse chestnut and buckeye**
Aesculus species: (Seeds, nuts) Inflammation, stupor, paralysis.
- **Horse nettle**
Solanum carolinense: (Leaves, berries) Varied effects.
- **Horsetail**
Equisetum arvense etc.: (All parts) Staggering, anorexia, rigidity, coma.
- **Hurricane Plant**
- **Hyacinth**
- **Hydrangea**
Hydrangea species: (Leaves, buds) Stomach upset, vomiting, diarrhea.
- **Iris**
Iris species: (All parts) Acute gastrointestinal problems.
- **Ivy (glacier, heart, sweetheart, needlepoint, ripple, English, devil's)**
Hedera species: (Leaves) Breathing problems, stomach illness.
- **Jack-in-the-pulpit**
Arisaema species: (Leaves, roots) Varied effects.
- **Jasmine**
Jasminum species: (Berries) Varied effects.
- **Jerusalem Cyerry**
- **Jimson Weed**
- **Juniper**
Juniperus sabina: (All parts) Irritation of nervous system.
- **Kalanchoe**
- **Lantana, yellow sage, red sage**
Lantana species: (Unripe fruit) Digestive problems, diarrhea, death.
- **Lily of the valley (and other lilies)**
Convallaria majalis: (All parts) Violent purgative, heart stimulant.
- **Locoweed**
Astragalus & Oxytropis species: (All parts) Hallucinogen.
- **Lupine**
- **Marble Queen**
- **Marijuana**
Cannabis sativa: (All parts) Hallucinogen.
- **Marsh marigold, white marsh marigold, cowslip**
Caltha species: (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Matrimony vine**
Lycium barbarum: (Leaves, shoots) Varied effects.
- **May apple & mandrake**
Podophyllum peltatum: (Herbage, roots, seeds) Stomach upset, diarrhea, vomiting.
- **Milkweed**
Asclepias species: (All parts) Depression, stammering, respiratory difficulties, coma, death.
- **Mistletoe**
Phoradendron flavescens: (Berries) Vomiting, diarrhea, convulsions, death.
- **Mock orange**
Philadelphus lewisii: (All parts) Vomiting, stomach pain, diarrhea.
- **Monkey pod or rain tree**
Samanea species: (All parts) Vomiting, stomach pain, diarrhea.

- **Monkshood, wolfsbane or aconite**
Aconitum species: (All parts) Can cause sudden death.
- **Moonseed**
Menispermum canadense: (Fruit, roots) Convulsions.
- **Morning glory**
Ipomoea species (Seeds): Depression, unusual behavior.
- **Mother-in-Law**
- **Mountain laurel**
Kalmia species : (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Narcissus**
- **Nephthysis**
- **Nightshade (black, common, deadly)**
Solanum nigrum: (Leaves, raw fruit) Brain disturbances. Most potent nightshade.
- **Nightshade (woody, climbing)**
Solanum dulcamara: (All parts) Brain disturbances.
- **Nutmeg**
Myristica fragrans: (All parts) Hallucinogen.
- **Nuttall's larkspur**
Delphinium species: (All parts) Severe digestive upset, nervous excitement.
- **Nux vomica**
Strychnos nux-vomica: (All parts) Convulsions.
- **Oak**
Quercus species: (Leaves, acorns) Ingestion of large amounts can affect kidneys.
- **Oleander**
Nerium oleander. (All parts) Affects heart; extremely poisonous.
- **Ornamental sweetpea**
Lathyrus species: (Seeds) Can cause death in large quantities.
- **Pale spike lobelia**
Lobelia spicata: (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Panda**
- **Periwinkle**
Vinca species: (All parts) Depression, unusual behavior.
- **Peyote**
Lophophora williamsii: (All parts) Hallucinogen.
- **Philodendron**
- **Pigweed**
Amaranthus species: (Leaves, stems, roots) Varied effects.
- **Poinsettia**
Euphorbia pulcherrima: (Leaves) Nausea and vomiting.
- **Poison hemlock**
Conium maculatum: (All parts) Lung paralysis, death.
- **Poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac**
Rhus and Toxicodendron species: (All parts) Skin rash.
- **Poke weed, pokeberry**
Plytolacca americana, P.rigida: (All parts, esp. roots) Mouth burning, salivation, vomiting, diarrhea, spasms, convulsions, death.
- **Potato**
Solanum tuberosum (Unripe tubers, tuber sprouts): Cardiac depression. Can be fatal.
- **Pothos, marble queen**
Epipremnum aureum: (All parts) Swollen mouth, painful tongue, sore lips.
- **Privet**
Ligustrum species: (All parts) Digestive upset, nervous reactions.
- **Red Emerald**

- **Red princess**
Dictyosperma album: (All parts) Swollen mouth, painful tongue, sore lips.
- **Rhododendron**
- **Rhubarb**
Rheum rhaponticum: (Leaves) Can cause kidney rupture.
- **Ribbon plant**
- **Rocky Mountain elderberry**
Sambucus species: (Berries) Digestive upset, diarrhea, vomiting.
- **Rosary pea, precatory-bean**
Abrus precatorius: (Seeds) Very toxic. One seed can be fatal.
- **Sago Palm**
- **Satin Pothos**
- **Schefflera**
- **Scorpionweed**
Phacelia crenulata: (Hairs) Severe rash.
- **Skunk cabbage**
Symplocarpus foetidus: (All parts) Vomiting and diarrhea sometimes.
- **Sneezeweed**
Helenium loopesi: (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Snowberry**
Symphoricarpos racemosus: (Fruit) Digestive upset.
- **Soapberry**
Sapindus drummondii: (Leaves, fruits) Vomiting and diarrhea sometimes.
- **Sorghum, milo, Sudan, Johnson grass**
Sorghum species: Varied effects.
- **Spinach**
Spinacia species: (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Sprangeri fern**
Asparagus sprengeri: (All parts) Varied effects.
- **St. John's wort, Klamath weed**
Hypericum perforatum: (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Star-of-Bethlehem**
Ornithoglaum umbellatum: (Bulb) Gastrointestinal distress.
- **Striped Dracaena**
- **Texas mountain laurel, mescal bean**
Sophora secundiflora: Poisonous seeds used for necklaces in Mexico.
- **Tomato vine**
Lycopersicon esculentum: (Green parts) Varied effects.
- **Tree-of-Heaven**
Ailanthus altissima: (Bark, roots) Jaundice, digestive, urinary problems.
- **Tulip**
- **Umbrella plant**
Cyperus alternifolius (All parts) Varied effects.
- **Water hemlock**
Cicuta douglasii, *C. maculata*: (Stem, roots) Violent convulsions. Can be fatal
- **White snake root**
Eupatorium rugosum: (Leaves, stems) Varied effects.
- **Wild mushrooms (Fly, monkey agaric, death angel, death cap, panther cap)**
Amanita species: (All parts) 1-2 "cups" can cause death; toadstools also toxic.
- **Wisteria**
Wisteria species: (Seeds) Vomiting and diarrhea sometimes.
- **Yew (English, Western, American)**
Taxus species: (All parts) Vomiting, diarrhea, convulsions, death.
- **Yucca**

To delay or prevent absorption of the poison, mixed **activated charcoal** (one tablet to 10 cc water). Administer one teaspoonful per two pounds body weight followed by a pint of water. This may require a stomach tube and the assistance of a veterinarian. Wait thirty minutes and give **Glauber's salt**, one teaspoonful per ten pounds body weight, or **Milk of Magnesia**, one teaspoonful per five pounds body weight. In a pinch, you can coat the bowel with milk, egg whites or vegetable oil and give a warm water enema. **Never give activated charcoal if the animal is very depressed, comatose, unable to swallow or having seizures.**



DANGEROUS FOODS

Almost 90% of poisonings are unintentional, and fortunately, only a small percentage come from adverse reactions to food, drugs, and other products.*

Chocolate, coffee, tea, and various medications contain stimulants (caffeine, theobromine, and theophylline) that can cause vomiting, diarrhea, increased heart rate, heart arrhythmias, rapid breathing, muscle tremors, seizures, hyperactivity, and sometimes coma and death in both dogs and cats. Symptoms appear within one to four hours after ingestion. A fairly large amount of chocolate must be consumed (16 ounces for a 20 to 40-pound dog), but deaths have been reported after ingestion of 115mg/kg of baking chocolate, the most toxic variety (about 3 ounces for a 15-pound dog). A lethal dose for a cat varies from 100-300 mg/kg. Don't leave chocolates out where your dog or cat can get into them.

Onions, onion powder An excess of onions can be toxic in dogs in cats. This is seen most commonly in kittens or sick cats that are fed baby food containing onion powder. Baby food can be good for cats who are reluctant to eat, but always make sure there is no onion powder in the ingredients.

Nightshades (potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant) can cause problems with arthritis, inflammation, parasites, respiratory problems, swelling, and excess mucus. However, the fried green fruit is edible.

Raw salmon (mainly Pacific and fresh water) can contain parasites which cause rickettsial disease, easily treated with antibiotics; but if untreated, it is fatal within 7 to 10 days of ingestion.

Other items which should never be given to dogs and cats include **grapes, raisins, alcohol, yeast dough, macadamia nuts, hops, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, chewing tobacco, raw egg whites, avocados, garlic, macadamia nut salt, fatty foods, Xylitol, raw yeast dough, and moldy or spoiled foods.**

If your pet has swallowed a toxic food, particularly chocolate, induce vomiting by giving **syrup of ipecac** (1 teaspoon per 10 pounds body weight), **hydrogen peroxide 3%** (1 to 3 teaspoons every 10 minutes times 3), or **salt** (1/2 to 1 teaspoon at the back of tongue). **Note:** Do not give salt to cats. It may not be a good idea to administer salt to small dogs. Consult your veterinarian. If 2 hours have passed, administer **activated charcoal**.



TOXIC HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS

*Approximately 20% of all poisonings are from insecticides, and almost 15% are from cleaning products. Of the drug poisonings, about one-fifth are from antibiotics or antivirals as well as analgesics such as acetaminophen, non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, and prescription painkillers. About another 10% are poisoned by topical preparations. About 5.5% poisoned by drugs die.**

There are a tremendous number of potentially toxic household products, but they fall into two basic categories: the first includes **petroleum products, acids, and alkalis**; and the second is **everything else, including plants**.

First category:

- Drain cleaners
- Floor polish
- Furniture polish
- Household cleaners
- Lighter fluid
- Lye
- Oven cleaner
- Paint remover
- Paint thinner
- Shoe polish
- Toilet bowl cleaner
- Floor and furniture wax
- Wood preservative

The above can all cause mouth, throat, and stomach burns if ingested. Symptoms of poisoning are bloody vomiting, difficulty breathing, diarrhea, shock, depression, coma, convulsions, coughing, abdominal pain, and redness around the mouth.

If you know that an acid was swallowed, rinse out your pet's mouth and administer an **antacid (baking soda paste, Milk of Magnesia, Pepto-Bismol)**. If the substance is an alkali, use **vinegar or lemon juice**. **Milk, egg whites, or vegetable oil** can be used to absorb poison from the intestines. **DO NOT INDUCE VOMITING** because of the risk of a ruptured stomach or a burned esophagus.

Aspiration or inhalation of a petroleum product such as **gasoline, kerosene, or turpentine** can cause pneumonia and respiratory failure. Administer **mineral or vegetable oil** by mouth, followed in thirty minutes by **Glauber's salt** (sodium sulphate- 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds body weight) to delay absorption from into the intestinal tract. **DO NOT INDUCE VOMITING**. Artificial respiration or CPR may also be necessary.

Second category:

- **Acetaminophen**
- **Acetone**
- **Alcohol**
- **Antifreeze**
- **Strychnine**
- **Lead-based paint**
- **Aspirin (toxic to cats)**
- **Human medicines (cold/flu meds, antidepressants, diet pills, anticancer drugs)**
- **Bleach**
- **Cosmetics**
- **Crayons**
- **DDT**
- **Deoderants**
- **Detergents**
- **Disinfectants**
- **Fabric softener**
- **Fireworks**
- **Flea and tick products**
- **Fly bait**
- **Hair dye**
- **Ibuprofen**
- **Lime/scale remover**
- **Liquid potpourri**
- **Magic markers**
- **Matches**
- **Mothballs**
- **Perfume**
- **Pine oil**
- **Rat and roach poison**
- **Shellac**
- **Snail and slug bait**
- **Spoiled garbage**
- **Suntan lotions**
- **Human vitamins**
- **Weed killer**

The above, among other products, can poison your pet. Common symptoms of ingestion are vomiting, diarrhea, delirium, collapse, coma, and convulsions.

The first step is to remove the poison from your pet's stomach by getting him to vomit. However, **DO NOT INDUCE VOMITING** if over two hours have passed since ingestion, or if your pet is very depressed or comatose, has swallowed tranquilizers or a sharp object, is having seizures, or is unable to swallow.

Substances that will cause vomiting are **syrup of ipecac** (1 teaspoon per 10 pounds body weight), **hydrogen peroxide (3%) and water** (1-3 teaspoons, repeat every 10 minutes), **mustard and water**, or **salt** placed at the back of the tongue (as much as 1 tablespoon). To administer liquid to a cat, tilt the head back at a 45-degree angle and use a spoon or eyedropper to pour liquid into the side of his mouth, pulling out to form a pouch; jiggle the pouch or tap the nose to induce swallowing.

The second step is to delay absorption of the poison from the intestinal tract by coating it with a binding substance such as **activated charcoal mixed with water** (1 teaspoon per 2 pounds body weight), depending on how cooperative your pet is. Then wait thirty minutes and administer Glauber's salt (1 teaspoon per 10 pounds body weight) or **Milk of Magnesia** (1 teaspoon per 5 pounds body weight). However, it may be easier to get your pet to swallow **milk, egg whites, or vegetable oil**.

Third, a **laxative or warm water enema** can be given to speed up elimination of the poison.

In all cases of poisoning, try to keep your pet warm and as quiet as possible. If he shows signs of shock (pale gums, weak, rapid pulse, rapid breathing, skin cold to touch), wrap him in a blanket and transport him to a veterinary clinic. If you notice signs of nervous system involvement, then it's too late to try the above treatments; you must get him to a veterinarian as soon as possible. Try to bring a sample of his vomit as well as the poison in its original container for analysis.

Antifreeze: The sweet taste of antifreeze--or ethylene glycol--appeals to dogs and cats. Signs of toxicity are vomiting, drunken gait, weakness, mental depression, and coma. Animals who recover from antifreeze ingestion may have kidney damage.

Strychnine: This is used as a rat killer, and comes in colored pellets. The first signs of strychnine poisoning are agitation, excitability, and apprehension followed by painful seizures with the head thrown back and cessation of breathing. Tapping the animal or clapping your hands can cause a strychnine-induced seizure. Later symptoms are tremors, drooling, muscle spasms, leg paddling, and collapse. Cover the dog with a blanket, try not to touch him or make loud noises, and transport him to a veterinarian immediately.

Arsenic: Found in slug and snail baits, ant poisons, weed killers, and insecticides, arsenic ingestion can quickly lead to death. There may also be signs like excessive thirst, drooling, vomiting, staggering, intense stomach pain, cramps, diarrhea, paralysis, and garlic breath. Induce vomiting and get to a veterinarian as soon as possible for administration of a specific arsenic antidote.

Lead: Lead poisoning can either be chronic (puppies and young dogs chewing on lead paint-coated substances) or acute. Lead is an ingredient in insecticides, paints, linoleum, batteries, golf balls, putty, roofing and plumbing materials. Ingestion can cause colic, vomiting, fits, an uncoordinated gait, excitation, continuous barking, hysteria, weakness, stupor, and blindness.

Warfarin: This is used as a rat poison. It interferes with blood clotting, leading to hemorrhage. Some signs of warfarin poisoning are blood in the stool or urine and nose bleed. Usually one dose of warfarin is not fatal. Vitamin K (for clotting) is an antidote.

Aspirin or acetaminophen: Even half a tablet can cause cats to experience breathing difficulties, liver and red blood cell damage, and head swelling.

About 1-2% of all pets poisoned die as a result. Poison stats for dogs and cats are similar, although in general, more dogs are poisoned than cats. It's important to note that these statistics are only from reported cases. There are many that go unreported.*



FROSTBITE, HEAT STROKE, BURNS, ETC.

Hypothermia, or dangerously low body temperature, can result if your pet is left out too long in the cold and wind. It is more likely to affect dogs than cats, because cat fur is generally thicker than dog fur. Small or short hair dogs and wet animals are particularly susceptible to hypothermia. Symptoms include violent shivering, stumbling, exhaustion, listlessness, apathy, and drowsiness, leading to collapse and coma if not treated. **Rectal temperatures in hypothermic cats range from 80 to 90 degrees; in dogs, below 97 degrees.** If your pet becomes hypothermic, wrap her in a blanket or coat and bring her indoors immediately. If she's wet, give her a warm bath and rub briskly with a towel. Apply warm water packs to the armpits, chest, and abdomen until the rectal temperature is normal. You can also use a hair dryer or air comb to provide heat. You may administer honey or sugar as your pet begins to move to raise the blood sugar.

Another serious risk in freezing temperatures is **frostbite**. Frostbite looks much like a burn. It is rare in cats, but the tips of their ears and tails can freeze, and may appear pale, then red and swollen with the return of circulation. They may be hot and painful to the touch. The hair may fall out, and the skin may peel. The toes, ears, and scrotum are susceptible to frostbite in dogs. To treat frostbite, place your pet in a warm room. Give warm water baths, or use a hot water bottle or a heating blanket to increase body temperature (which will happen slowly). Warm frostbitten parts with your hands or warm, moist towels for about twenty minutes. Administer warm liquids. The return of sensation is painful, and dogs in particular may attempt to bite their skin, which should be discouraged. Gradually your pet should become more alert. Do not rub or squeeze the skin or apply a pressure dressing. Antibiotic ointments may be used, and the area covered with a loose bandage to avoid further injury to the tissue. **If your pet seems in pain or develops an infection, take him to your veterinarian for treatment.**

In hot weather, dogs and cats can suffer from **heatstroke**, a serious condition that requires immediate attention. Because dogs and cats do not tolerate high temperatures as well as humans, they need to be protected from situations such as being left in a closed car in hot weather, confined on concrete runs or chained without shade, or being muzzled while put under a hair dryer. Also, short-nosed dogs and cats as well as animals suffering from conditions that impair breathing are at special risk. The symptoms of heat stroke are rapid, frantic, noisy breathing, with bright red tongue and mucous membranes, thick saliva, and vomiting. **The rectal temperature is high (often over 106 degrees F.).** If left untreated, heat stroke can lead to bloody diarrhea, weakness, staggering, coma and death. To treat heat stroke, the first step is to move the animal to a cooler area. If the temperature is over 104 degrees F. or if there is unsteadiness, immerse the animal in a tub of cold water or hose him down with a garden hose. If the temperature is over 106 degrees F., administer a cold water enema until the temperature goes down to 103 degrees F.

House hazards: **Balconies without safety railings; bath tubs, hot tubs, swimming pools or sinks with water in them; open doors and windows; fireplace flames and ashes; toilet bowl water; open washers and dryers; open or damaged fences and gates; algae in ponds; outdoor grill flames and ashes; deck lattice; de-icing salts; compost; car oil; pesticides; cocoa bean shell mulch fertilizer;**

Household products such as **detergents, oven, drain, and toilet bowl cleaners, as well as mace can also cause chemical burns to the skin or eyes.** If your pet gets a chemical in his eyes or on his skin, wash the affected area with a steady stream of fresh water, preferably with a hose. Do not touch the area yourself, and make sure you don't spread it further over the animal. A sterile eyewash called Dacriose can be used to flush the eyes. For acids such as toilet bowl cleaner or mace, a skin rinse of water and baking soda can be used. Alkalis such as drain cleaners can be neutralized with a weak vinegar solution. Blot dry and apply antibiotic ointment and a loose bandage.

Another common household injury is a **burn caused by exposure to the sun, hot water, hot containers, tar, grease, a heated burner, chewing on electrical wires, hot barbecue grills, or building fires.** Animals with noses that have insufficient pigment or close clipped, white-coated dogs are susceptible to sunburn. Burns are treatable if less than 15% of the body is affected; if more than 50% is burned, the prognosis is not good.

First-degree burns are very superficial. They are red and painful, with singed but still attached hair. Healing is rapid. Clip the burned hair away with scissors and flush the area with water. Wash with surgical soap and dry with clean, sterile gauze. Apply cold compresses or ice packs for twenty minutes to lessen the pain. Antibiotic ointment can be applied.

Second-degree burns cause severe swelling and reddened, painful skin that will slough off. Healing is slower. There may be significant fluid loss. Cover the burns with a clean cloth (but not cotton). You may have to treat for shock. Do not apply water, antiseptics, or ointments. See your veterinarian for further treatment.

Third-degree burns are very serious and require emergency care. The hair falls out and the skin becomes black or pearly white. Infection and destruction of skin results. The burn is painless because nerves are destroyed. Healing is slow and usually requires skin grafting.

If your pet has **chewed an electric cord, he may be burned on the lips, tongue, and gums as well as getting an electric shock,** which can lead to cardiac arrest or fluid in the lungs. Feel the chest or the femoral pulse (near the groin) for a heartbeat. **Seek medical help immediately.** CPR may be needed, as well as treatment for shock.



INSECT STINGS AND SNAKE BITES

Among the insects and spiders that can sting are **bees, wasps, yellow jackets, ants**, to the more serious bites of **black widow and Missouri brown spiders, tarantulas, centipedes and scorpions, and wood ticks**. Reactions to stings range from painful swelling at the sting site to sharp pain followed by chills, fever, labored breathing, and even shock. In addition, the bites of wood ticks causes paralysis. If your dog or cat is stung, try to identify the insect or spider. Remove the stinger, if any, with tweezers. An alternative way of removing it is to scrape a dull knife perpendicular to the skin several times to grab the stinger. Use a paste of **baking soda** applied to the sting and **ice packs** to relieve swelling and pain. A **freshly sliced onion** is useful for bee, hornet or wasp stings, or a drop of **ammonia water**. An herbal treatment is a drop of **nettle extract** applied to the sting. **Calamine lotion** can relieve itching.

The majority of snakes are nonpoisonous and their bites show teeth marks in the shape of a horseshoe. In the U.S., there are four poisonous varieties: **coral snakes, cottonmouth moccasins, rattlesnakes, and copperheads (pit vipers)**. They leave fang marks when they bite. **Pit vipers** are identified by large arrow-shaped heads, pits below and between the eyes, elliptical (slit) pupils, rough scales, and two fangs in the upper jaw. Their bite leaves two puncture wounds and local reaction happens quickly (swelling, extreme pain, redness, skin hemorrhage). Depending on the size and species of the snake, the bite's location, and the amount of toxin absorbed, behavior ranges from restlessness, panting, drooling and weakness to diarrhea, collapse, seizures, shock, and sometimes death. **Coral snakes** are small, with a small head, black nose, and brightly colored bands of red, yellow, white and black (red and yellow are next to each other). Their bite leaves two fang marks, with a less severe local reaction but excruciating pain. An animal bitten by a coral snake will have vomiting, diarrhea, urinary incontinence, and later paralysis, convulsions and coma.

Treatment includes **identifying the snake**. Look for fang marks. Restrain the animal and apply a **flat tourniquet** above the bite. Use a **knife or razor blade** to make parallel cuts 1/4-inch deep through the fang marks. If on a leg, make them up and down. Blood should ooze from the bite. Apply **mouth suction** (do not do this if you have a sore or cut in your mouth). Spit out the blood, but if you swallow some poison, your stomach will detoxify it. Continue suction for 30 minutes. Loosen the tourniquet for 30 seconds every 30 minutes. Keep the animal quiet, because motion and excitement increase the absorption of the poison. **Carry to veterinarian for antivenom and antibiotic treatment.**



DANGEROUS FOREIGN OBJECTS

Puppies and kittens are naturally curious and orally inclined, and will put just about anything in their mouths. But older dogs and cats are also known to pick up and even try to eat dangerous objects. **Bone splinters, batteries, bread twist ties, buttons, coins, cotton swabs, hairpins, jewelry, nylons, paper clips, plastic wrap, socks, rubber bands, dental floss, towels, wax, string, yarn, thread, needles, tinsel, ribbons, angel hair, fire salts, bubbling lights, balloons, Styrofoam, plastic toys, fake grass, fireworks, and glass Christmas tree ornaments and hooks are dangerous if chewed or swallowed.** Cooked chicken and turkey bones can splinter and choke your pet or puncture its stomach. If your pet appears distressed, drools, slobbers, swallows painfully, regurgitates food and water, vomits, coughs, bleeds from a body opening, or appears to have stomach pain or breathing problems, it may be caused by a blockage or perforation of the digestive tract (esophagus, stomach, intestine). **Seek medical help**

as soon as possible. To try to prevent indiscriminate chewing, purchase a bottle of **bitter apple**--a flavor dogs hate--and spray it on dangerous objects to discourage your dogs. Other options are applying chili powder, or citrus flavors, which cats loathe.

If you suspect that your pet may have swallowed a sharp object, you can feed him a **large meal of pet food and bread, flour paste, or cotton balls soaked in milk or broth** to coat the object and cushion its passage through the digestive tract. This is particularly important if it's a bone chip, a pin or a piece of glass. Check his feces every day for the object.

Objects such as **sticks, stones, cloth, rubber, leather, and balls of hair** can also lodge in the intestine. Mix mineral oil in the food to speed their passage.

The mouth (including the lips, gums, palate, between the teeth, and the roof) can harbor **bone splinters, wood splinters, sewing needles and pins, porcupine quills, fish hooks, and plant awns.** Plant awns and burrs can pose special problems. They can get into ears and caught between paws, especially in long-haired pets, and cause infections. Coughing, gagging, licking the lips, salivating, shaking the head or pawing at the mouth, loss of energy, refusal to eat, or bad breath are all signs that a sharp object may be stuck in this area. Open your pet's mouth and look inside with a good light. You may be able to remove the object yourself, but a sedative may be needed.

Small rubber balls can block the windpipe, and bones may lodge sideways. This can cause choking and gagging. Soothe your pet and keep him quiet. Look in his mouth for the object. Take him to the vet if you can't remove it. If he has fainted, you will have to try to get it out. Hold his neck in back of the object, and apply pressure to the throat to keep it from passing down while you hook it with your fingers. Work it loose if you can. You may have to perform the **Heimlich maneuver.** Lay the animal on her side, place the palms just behind the last rib and give four quick thrusts. This usually dislodges the object. Repeat if it doesn't work the first time.

For more on poisoning and other medical emergencies, I recommend two excellent and detailed books by Delbert G. Carlson, D.V.M. and James M. Giffin, M.D.: **Dog Owner's Home Veterinary Handbook** and **Cat Owner's Home Veterinary Handbook.** For an alternative medicine point of view, refer to **Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats** by Richard H. Pitcairn, D.V.M., Ph.D. & Susan Hubble Pitcairn.

Poisoning statistics derived from **Veterinary and Human Toxicology, Carl Hornfeldt of Hennepin Regional Poison Center & Michael J. Murphy, D.V.M., Ph.D. of University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine*

