

Chocolate can sicken and even kill dogs, and it is one of the most common causes of canine poisoning. No amount of chocolate is OK for your dog to consume. Dark chocolate and baker's chocolate are riskiest; milk and white chocolate pose a much less serious risk. Most of us have heard that chocolate can make dogs sick.

But how serious is the risk? What Makes Chocolate Poisonous to Dogs?

Chocolate is made from cocoa, and cocoa beans contain caffeine and a related chemical compound called theobromine, which is the real danger. The problem is that dogs metabolize theobromine much more slowly than humans. The buzz we get from eating chocolate may last 20 to 40 minutes, but for dogs it lasts many hours.

After 17 hours, half of the theobromine a dog has ingested is still in the system. Theobromine is also toxic to cats, but there are very few reported cases of theobromine poisoning in felines because they rarely eat chocolate. Many dogs, on the other hand, will eat just about anything! Even small amounts of chocolate can cause vomiting and diarrhoea in dogs. Truly toxic amounts can induce hyperactivity, tremors, high blood pressure, a rapid heart rate, seizures, respiratory failure, and cardiac arrest.

How Much is Too Much?

The more theobromine a cocoa product contains, the more poisonous it is to your dog. Unsweetened baker's chocolate contains about 390 milligrams of theobromine per ounce -- about 10 times more than milk chocolate and more than twice as much as semi-sweet chocolate. White chocolate contains very little theobromine. But the real danger lies with dark chocolate.

Deaths have been reported with theobromine doses as low as 115 milligrams per kilogram (2.2 pounds) of body weight. So 20 ounces of milk



chocolate, 10 ounces of semi-sweet chocolate, and just 2.25 ounces of baking chocolate could potentially kill a 22-pound (10kg) dog. Serious toxic reactions can occur with ingestion of about 100 to 150 milligrams of theobromine per kilogram of body weight.

Your Dog Ate Chocolate: Now What?

RING YOUR VET ASAP

After eating a potentially toxic dose of chocolate, dogs typically develop diarrhoea and start vomiting. If the dog isn't vomiting on its own, your vet may advise inducing vomiting immediately to keep as much theobromine as possible from entering the system. When a dog shows signs of hyperactivity and agitation or is having seizures, the faster you get it to the vet the better. But there is no specific antidote for chocolate poisoning.

Usually, after vomiting is induced, activated charcoal is given to help prevent the absorption of the remaining toxins. Fluids are typically given along with intravenous drugs to limit seizures and protect the heart. Symptoms of theobromine poisoning generally occur within four to 24 hours after chocolate is consumed.

| T: 0191 5493535

| F: 0191 5493537

| A: The King's Road, SR5 2LH

| W: www.kingsroadvets.org

| E: admin@kingsroadvets.org

