

Dogs & Chocolate – No amount is safe!

Americans consume 18% of the world's chocolate, so most households will stock at least some of this sweet. Homes with dogs however, need to be extra careful about stocking up on this favorite treat! Experts agree that there's no "safe" amount of chocolate for a dog to consume, though the consequences vary greatly depending on how much is ingested.



All chocolate contains Theobromine, a chemical related to caffeine, which dogs are much more sensitive to than humans. The darker and less sweet the chocolate, the more of this chemical is contained per ounce (see table below). Since white chocolate contains only $\frac{1}{4}$ of a milligram per ounce of chocolate, it would be unusual for it to harm your pet. However, the potency of dry cocoa powder makes it extremely hazardous to even large dogs.

Type of Chocolate	Theobromine (mg/oz)	Amount Harmful
		Per Pound of Body Weight
White	0.25	Not researched
Milk	44-60	0.5 ounces
Dark semisweet	135	0.13 ounces
Unsweetened baker's	390-450	Any amount requires a call to your vet!
Dry cocoa powder	400-737	Any amount requires a call to your vet!

Ingestion of small amounts of Theobromine (relative to the size of the dog) can result in vomiting and diarrhea. Larger amounts (again, relative to the dog's size) can cause hyperactivity, agitation, pancreatitis, elevated heart rate, seizures and possibly (though rarely) even death.

Veterinarians say concerned dog owners make up 95% of chocolate-poisoning calls, since cats rarely will eat something outside their normal diet and they typically don't care for chocolate! Your best course of action, once you realize your dog has ingested chocolate, is to call your vet right away. The faster you administer "treatment," the better the outcome for all involved.

Your vet will make some calculations related to how much, and the exact type of chocolate that was eaten, and the size of the dog. You can also call the **ASPCA's 24-hour poison hotline (888-426-4435)**, which is staffed with veterinarians round the clock. They will ask a similar series of questions to determine the severity of the situation. These medical professionals may advise you to induce vomiting, if your dog hasn't taken care of that already. Depending on the severity, they will instruct you if immediate medical intervention is required.

Even if your pet is showing some signs of poisoning, their prognosis is excellent for a full recovery. However, it can be a very stressful situation for everyone. It's a good practice, especially around any holiday, to keep chocolate behind a closed cabinet door, or on a very high shelf. "Out of reach" is the perfect place for chocolate in any pet-lover's home!