



NORTH MACLEAN
**Family
Vet**

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Chocolate Toxicity



Chocolate may be nice treat for us, but it can be deadly for our pets. Dogs are more commonly affected by chocolate toxicity than cats but only because they are more likely to eat it if they find it. However, both dogs and cats can become very sick if they do eat any chocolate.

What causes toxicity?

Chocolate and cocoa contain a chemical called theobromine that is harmless for us but can cause very serious sickness in dogs and cats. The caffeine present in chocolate can also be toxic. Dogs and cats can't metabolise theobromine like we can which makes them very sensitive to its effects.

How much chocolate is a toxic amount?

Milk chocolate and dark chocolate contain significant amounts of theobromine and will cause serious poisoning without treatment. White chocolate contains less theobromine but the caffeine content can still cause serious disease. There is a big variation in how each individual reacts to the chocolate. Some animals may only need a little bit to show clinical signs, while others may not be as sensitive. The problem is that it is almost impossible to know until it is too late.

What signs are caused by chocolate toxicity?

The effects of chocolate poisoning can vary depending on what type of chocolate the animal has eaten, how much they've eaten and how long it has been in their digestive tract. The most common signs seen with chocolate toxicity are restlessness, vomiting, diarrhoea, increased thirst and/or urination, muscle tremors, seizures and respiratory distress. Some or all of these signs may be present and, if left untreated, can be fatal.

What is involved in treatment?

The treatment for chocolate toxicity begins with causing the animal to vomit, preventing more toxin from being absorbed into the blood stream. Sometimes animals require hospitalisation and need to be given fluids directly into the blood stream. The animal may be given a substance called "activated charcoal" which helps to bind up any toxin left in the digestive tract and also reduces how much toxin is absorbed. This activated charcoal may be given for up to 3 days after the animal has eaten the chocolate. If the animal is showing signs, such as seizures, then further treatment and monitoring in hospital may be needed.

If you have any questions or you suspect that your pet has eaten **any** chocolate (white, milk or dark) please contact us straight away on 07 3297 0803 and come down to our clinic.

Often the sooner than animal is treated after eating chocolate, the faster the treatment works and the better the outcome.

Because pets are family too