

Christmas dangers for dogs

If you'd rather avoid an emergency trip to the vets this Christmas, beware of these Christmas dangers for dogs:

Calling all dog owners

21 dangers that could ruin your dog's Christmas

If you'd rather avoid a trip to one of our out-of-hours pet emergency clinics or 24/7 hospitals this festive season then beware of these:

1. FOOD AND DRINK

- 1. Chocolate**
Danger: Chocolate contains a stimulant called theobromine, a bit like caffeine, that's poisonous to dogs.
How to avoid: Never put chocolate treats, or presents that may contain chocolate, on or under your tree.
4/5 (not safe)
- 2. Christmas pudding and mince pies**
Danger: All grapes, raisins, currants and sultanas, as well as foods that contain them, are toxic to dogs.
How to avoid: Keep well out of reach and carefully dispose of leftovers.
5/5 (not safe)
- 3. Macadamia nuts**
Danger: Can cause weakness, tremors, vomiting and hyperthermia within 12 hours of ingestion.
How to avoid: Keep locked away in a cupboard and never leave lying around.
4/5 (not safe)
- 4. Onions**
Danger: Can cause stomach irritation and lead to red blood cell damage and anaemia.
How to avoid: All forms of onion can be a problem, even if an ingredient in stuffing or gravy, so make sure all leftovers are properly disposed of.
4/5 (not safe)
- 5. Alcohol**
Danger: Alcohol is significantly more toxic to dogs than to humans and may cause vomiting, diarrhoea, difficulty breathing, tremors, coma and even death.
How to avoid: Clean up spillages as they happen and never leave leftover drinks lying around.
3/5 (not safe)
- 6. Artificial sweeteners**
Danger: One sweetener in particular, xylitol, is found in many foods, including some cakes. Ingestion can lead to potentially fatal hypoglycaemia, acute liver disease and blood clotting.
How to avoid: Even small amounts can be extremely dangerous so avoid at all costs.
5/5 (not safe)
- 7. Blue cheese**
Danger: Seen by many as a festive treat, blue cheese is at its best around Christmas because that's when it's made with the last of the rich summer milk. Most contain a substance called roquefortine C, which dogs are sensitive to.
How to avoid: Keep well out of reach and dispose of leftovers.
1/5 (not safe)
- 8. Cooked bones**
Danger: Once cooked, all bones become brittle and splinter easily which can pierce your dog's digestive tract or cause an obstruction.
How to avoid: When preparing Christmas dinner, ensure all meat is kept on the kitchen surface and dispose of leftover carcasses in the outside bin.
3/5 (not safe)
- 9. Mouldy foods**
Danger: Mouldy dried dog food and mouldy human food, particularly dairy products, bread and nuts, contain lots of toxins that may make your dog ill.
How to avoid: Make sure your food recycling bin is well sealed or keep outside.
4/5 (not safe)

DECORATIONS

10. Christmas trees



Danger: Pine needles can cause mild stomach upset, cuts to the mouth and, in severe cases, even perforation of the intestines.

How to avoid: Vacuum daily and keep trees watered or buy an artificial tree.

2/5
Risk rating

1/5
Likelihood

11. Glass baubles



Danger: These tend to smash into shards when eaten, causing irritation, perforation or blockage.

How to avoid: Opt for shatter-proof baubles or decorations made of pet-friendly materials.

5/5
Risk rating

1/5
Likelihood

12. Tinsel



Danger: Dogs eat tinsel like weed and spaghetti. It can cause blockages or, even worse, work its way through the gut and into the intestine, which can be extremely serious.

How to avoid: Use pet-friendly alternative decorations.

4/5
Risk rating

2/5
Likelihood

13. Fairy lights



Danger: Some dogs will try to eat anything, including fairy lights. These may cause electric shock if chewed.

How to avoid: Use an extension cord that shuts off automatically when damaged and tape all loose wires to the floor.

3/5
Risk rating

1/5
Likelihood

14. Salt dough ornaments



Danger: Made by mixing flour and salt with water, these can cause potentially life-threatening toxicity. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhoea, and seizures.

How to avoid: Hang them high and well out of reach or avoid.

4/5
Risk rating

2/5
Likelihood

PLANTS

15. Poinsettia, mistletoe and ivy



Danger: All are mildly toxic and can cause vomiting, diarrhoea and other symptoms.

How to avoid: Keep well out of reach.

1/5
Risk rating

2/5
Likelihood

16. Lilies



Danger: Can cause convulsions and are potentially fatal when eaten in large quantities.

How to avoid: If you're keen on a Christmas bouquet, opt for red roses or white orchids instead.

1/5
Risk rating

3/5
Likelihood

17. Potpourri



Danger: Can cause serious gastrointestinal problems which can last several days even after the material has passed through.

How to avoid: Keep well out of reach.

3/5
Risk rating

2/5
Likelihood

PRESENTS

18. Toys



Danger: Some dogs will swallow anything that looks appealing, including children's toys, even if it's likely to put them at risk.

How to avoid: Monitor the opening of gifts and keep new toys out of reach.

4/5
Risk rating

4/5
Likelihood

19. Batteries



Danger: Ingestion of batteries is more common at Christmas and can cause chemical burns and heavy metal poisoning.

How to avoid: Never leave batteries, or small toys including batteries, lying around.

4/5
Risk rating

1/5
Likelihood

20. Wrapping or crepe paper

1/5 (Low risk)

Danger: While toxicity is low, eating a large amount of paper may cause an obstruction in the stomach.

How to avoid: Don't leave wrapped gifts lying around and dispose of old paper in an outside bin.



21. Silica gel

1/5 (Low risk)

Danger: Commonly found in packaging and typically non-toxic, these can cause blockages in the gut.

How to avoid: Monitor the opening of gifts that may contain these sachets and dispose of carefully.



RISK RATINGS EXPLAINED

- 1** Monitor your dog carefully and if you suspect a change in condition seek advice from your vet or, out of hours, contact your nearest [Vets Now pet emergency clinic](#) or [Vets Now 24/7 hospital](#).
- 2-3** If you suspect your dog has consumed any of the items listed seek urgent advice from your vet or, out of hours, contact your nearest [Vets Now pet emergency clinic](#) or [Vets Now 24/7 hospital](#).
- 4-5** Contact your vet immediately or, out of hours, call your nearest [Vets Now pet emergency clinic](#) or [Vets Now 24/7 hospital](#) as your dog may require urgent emergency treatment.

WHY DO SOME DOGS EAT ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING?

- They are natural scavengers
- They explore with their mouths
- Like humans, they eat when they're bored
- Binging is instinctive to dogs
- They may have a medical condition such as diabetes
- Constant begging may be a learned behaviour
- They may not be getting enough nutritious dog food

FESTIVE STATS TO GIVE YOU PAWS FOR THOUGHT

40% Increase in alcohol consumption in December

25m Christmas puddings eaten every year

230k tonnes of Christmas food that is thrown away

8.5m DOGS IN THE UK

256m £ spent on confectionery in the two weeks leading up to Christmas

420 average £ spent on presents by people in UK

2.4bn £ is wasted on uneaten, discarded food and unwanted gifts

61% of owners let their dogs join them for Christmas dinner

51% of households have a pet

40% increase in emergency calls to Vets Now at Christmas

83sq km wrapping paper sold in the UK every Christmas

70% of dogs get Christmas gifts from their owners

1 in 5 toxic plant cases in pets are due to lilies

9 in 10 poisonings happen while pets are in their own home

300m mince pies eaten over Christmas

750g of milk chocolate may cause a Labrador to have seizures

5.5m dog owners unknowingly feed their pets harmful food at Christmas

15% of dog owners have sought emergency help on Boxing Day

Sources

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Your pet emergency service
vets-now.com/christmas

