

Dangers of Lily Toxicity, Antifreeze, and Chocolate

Lily Toxicity

Lilies are plants that are toxic to both cats and dogs. The Easter Lily, Day Lily, and the Tiger Lily are examples of these plants. Both the leaves and flowers appear to cause issues, but the flowers are the most toxic part of the plant. Lilies cause kidney failure in cats and only a mild, short term upset stomach in dogs.

Symptoms of lily toxicity can vary from vomiting, lethargy, decreased appetite, increased thirst and urination, depression, a “drunken” gait, muscle tremors, and seizures.

Treatment of lily toxicity involves making your pet vomit if the ingestion is recent, administering activated charcoal, IV fluids, baseline blood work and medications for vomiting. Cats are typically hospitalized for several days on IV fluids to “flush” the toxins out of the body. Blood work is monitored while the cat is in the hospital to closely monitor for permanent kidney damage. If this toxicity is treated early, a full recovery is possible. Unfortunately, if treatment starts after kidney damage has occurred, there is a possibility of permanent kidney disease.

Chocolate

Chocolate contains caffeine and theobromine, which dogs cannot easily metabolize.

Chocolate can be toxic even in small quantities depending on the type consumed.

Different types of chocolate have different amounts of caffeine and theobromine in them.

White chocolate is less toxic than milk chocolate and milk chocolate is less toxic than dark chocolate. The most toxic type of chocolate is cocoa beans/cocoa mulch. Therefore the amount and the type of chocolate ingested are both important in determining whether your pet has consumed a toxic amount.

Symptoms of chocolate toxicity can vary from vomiting and diarrhea, pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), excitability/nervousness, tachycardia (rapid heart rate) and arrhythmias (abnormal heart beats), muscle tremors, seizures, and death depending on the amount ingested.

Treatment of chocolate toxicity involves making your pet vomit if the ingestion is recent, administering activated charcoal, IV fluids, and medications for vomiting and rapid heart rate or arrhythmia.

Hospitalization may be needed in large ingestions. A full recovery is typical in most cases within 12-24 hours but may be longer if a large quantity of chocolate was consumed.

Ethylene Glycol/Antifreeze

Ethylene glycol or antifreeze can also be found in solvents, rust removers, film processing solutions and taxidermist preservatives. Antifreeze becomes toxic when metabolized by the liver and nearly all is broken down in 24 hours after ingestion. Even a small ingestion can be fatal to dogs and cats. For

example, it only takes a couple of tablespoons of antifreeze to be toxic to a medium sized dog and ½ tablespoon to be toxic to an average sized cat.

Symptoms are seen in three stages with antifreeze toxicity. The symptoms seen in the first 12 hours are depression, vomiting, a “drunken” gait, seizures and an increase in thirst and urination. The vomit may appear bright green in color. If clinical signs continue to progress, tachycardia (rapid heart rate) and tachypnea (rapid breathing) will occur along with worsening lethargy and depression. After 12 to 24 hours, kidney failure will occur and pets will appear severely depressed with vomiting, diarrhea and dehydration.

Antifreeze is diagnosed based on clinical signs, a known exposure, or testing a small blood sample within 12 hours of ingestion. Antifreeze can also cause specific crystals to form in the urine and can sometimes be detected in a urinalysis. Baseline blood work will be recommended to evaluate the kidneys and monitored daily for kidney failure/damage during treatment.

Treatment of antifreeze toxicity involves making your pet vomit if the ingestion is recent, administering activated charcoal, IV fluids, controlling seizures and giving an antidote.

Time is extremely important since the antidote is not effective after kidney damage has occurred.

Hospitalization is always recommended so the antidote can be given at specific intervals up to 36 hours after the ingestion. A repeat antifreeze test will be done to determine if further treatment needed. If this toxicity is treated early, a full recovery is possible. Unfortunately, if treatment starts after kidney damage has occurred, there is a possibility of permanent kidney disease or death.