

My Pet Has Eaten Chocolate – What Should I Do?

Family Matters

It happens in seconds.

A box of chocolates left on the coffee table.

An Easter egg hidden a little too well.

A chocolate brownie cooling on the kitchen counter.

You turn around, and it's gone.

The first question most pet guardians ask is:

"Should I be worried?"

The answer is **yes—potentially**. Chocolate poisoning is one of the most common emergencies we see in dogs.

At Amity, we believe that knowing what to do quickly can make all the difference. Our purpose is to **Empower You Through Education**, helping you act calmly and confidently if your pet ever eats chocolate.

Why Is Chocolate Dangerous?

Chocolate contains two naturally occurring stimulants called **theobromine** and **caffeine**.

People break these down relatively quickly.

Dogs do not.

As these substances build up in the body, they can affect the nervous system, heart and muscles, sometimes causing life-threatening illness.

Cats are also susceptible, although they are much less likely to eat chocolate.

Not All Chocolate Is Equally Dangerous

The amount of theobromine varies enormously.

Generally:

- Cocoa powder is the most dangerous.

- Dark chocolate contains high levels.
- Milk chocolate contains less.
- White chocolate contains very little theobromine but is still unhealthy because of its fat and sugar content.

This is why knowing **exactly what type of chocolate** your pet has eaten is so important.

What Should I Do?

Don't wait for symptoms to appear.

Contact your veterinary practice **as soon as possible**.

The information that will help us most includes:

- Your pet's weight.
- The type of chocolate eaten.
- Approximately how much was eaten.
- When it happened.

If possible, keep the packaging and bring it with you. It often tells us exactly how much cocoa the product contains.

What Signs Might Develop?

Signs usually develop within a few hours and may include:

- Vomiting.
- Restlessness.
- Panting.
- Increased thirst.
- A racing heart.
- Tremors.
- Muscle twitching.
- Seizures.
- Collapse.

The earlier treatment begins, the better the outcome is likely to be.

Why Can't I Just Wait and See?

By the time symptoms appear, the chocolate has often already been absorbed into the body.

If your pet is seen soon after eating chocolate, we may be able to remove much of it from the stomach before it causes significant harm.

Early treatment is usually much simpler, safer and more effective than waiting until your pet becomes ill.

Can I Make My Pet Sick at Home?

We recommend speaking to your vet **before** trying anything at home.

Making a pet vomit isn't always safe, and in some situations it can do more harm than good.

The safest approach depends on what was eaten, how long ago it happened and your pet's overall health.

Most Pets Recover Well

The good news is that the vast majority of pets recover completely when treatment is started promptly.

The key is acting quickly rather than hoping for the best.

At Amity, we'd much rather receive a phone call that turns out not to be an emergency than have a pet arrive hours later after becoming seriously unwell.

Because when it comes to chocolate, time really does matter.

Because they're not just your pet.

They're family.

Family Matters.

If you need more information, book an appointment with an Amity vet. We're here to Empower You Through Education and help you become your pet's greatest advocate.