

POISONology

SAFETY & FIRST AID TIPS FROM THE ARIZONA POISON AND DRUG INFORMATION CENTER

Dogs love chocolate, but chocolate toxic to dogs



We got a call at the poison center from a concerned owner 10 minutes after their 15-pound puppy ate an unknown quantity of dark chocolate M & M's. The dog looked fine, according to the owner, who wanted to know what possible problems to look for at home.

Our immediate advice was to take the dog into an ER vet right away. This is a potentially lethal dose for a dog this size with that type of chocolate.

Most dogs will readily eat chocolate candy, cakes, brownies and other treats. As harmless as it may be to us, chocolate is actually one of the most toxic substances to dogs.

Chocolate contains theobromine, a naturally occurring stimulant found in the cocoa bean, and dogs simply do not have the digestive system to safely process the substance.

Signs and symptoms of chocolate poisoning in dogs include vomiting, diarrhea, restlessness, drooling, heart beat irregularities and seizures. These signs are sometimes delayed, so do not rely on how well your dog is doing over the first 30 minutes.

If you think that your dog has eaten any amount of chocolate, please call your local poison center or a veterinary poison center right away. Some types of chocolate are worse than others for your dog. Sometimes the case is manageable at home, but often, as in this sample case, the dog will need immediate treatment in an ER. Call us and we can guide you in the right direction.

And remember—the best treatment is prevention. Keep all forms of chocolate where your curious pooch with his super sniffer cannot reach it—in cupboards or high counters. Don't leave it on coffee tables, in your purse on a chair, or in packages under the Christmas tree.

If you have other poisoning concerns or questions call the tollfree national hotline at 1-800-222-1222 to reach your local poison center. If you live in Arizona outside of Maricopa County, this number will get you to our experts at the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center in Tucson.