



## Media Release

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## Valentine's Day Chocolate Can Be Deadly for Pets

If you get chocolates from your sweetie this Valentine's Day, make sure they stay safely away from your pets. Chocolate is toxic and can be fatal for animals. Dogs are at most risk because they are typically more interested in eating things they shouldn't. Cats and other animals are also susceptible to the toxic effects of chocolate, but are usually pickier about what they eat.

### Why is chocolate dangerous?

Cacao beans contain theobromine, which is toxic to animals. Humans aren't affected by this compound because we can break down and excrete it more efficiently. Its half life in a dog's body is 17.5 hours, but signs are most commonly seen within 12 hours (or less) of chocolate ingestion. Theobromine can stimulate the central nervous and cardiovascular systems and increase heart rate and blood pressure.

### What are the signs of toxicity?

- Excitement, nervousness & trembling
- Vomiting & diarrhea
- Excessive thirst & urination
- Muscle spasms & seizures
- Coma & death

### Why are some chocolates more toxic than others?

The more actual cacao bean, the more dangerous it is. For example, more pure chocolate, like unsweetened, dark, and baker's chocolates contain 8-10 times the amount of theobromine as milk chocolate. White chocolate contains theobromine, but in such small amounts that poisoning is unlikely. Semi-sweet chocolate falls roughly in between the two. Caffeine, which can also be dangerous, is present in chocolate, but there is less of it in chocolate than theobromine.

### But my dog ate a little bit once and didn't get sick!

It all depends on the size of the dog, how much and what kind of chocolate he ate. For example, a 50lb. dog would have to eat about 9oz. of milk chocolate to become sick. But if a 15lb. dog eats 2oz. of baker's chocolate, he would be at great risk. The same amount of white chocolate may only give him an upset stomach. **If you suspect your pet has eaten chocolate, call your veterinarian right away!** They can help you determine the proper treatment for your pet. Each dog is different.

### How is chocolate toxicity treated?

There is no specific antidote for theobromine toxicity. Medical treatment is supportive. Veterinarians may use IV fluids to prevent dehydration and to flush the toxin out. They may need to induce vomiting, use activated charcoal, or in the most serious of cases, use anti-seizure and/or cardiac medications to reduce tremors and regulate heart rates.

DoveLewis is Portland's 24-Hour Emergency and ICU Animal Hospital, offering advanced veterinary care in a state-of-the-art facility in Northwest Portland. DoveLewis also shares several 100% donor-funded programs with the community including one of America's largest volunteer-based animal blood banks, an award-winning animal assisted therapy program, a nationally recognized pet loss support program offering five free group therapy sessions each month, 24-hour stabilizing care for lost, stray and wild animals and financial assistance for low income families and owners of abused pets.