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CHOCOLATE AND DOGS

Dogs love the flavor of chocolate, but chocolate in sufficient doses is lethally toxic to dogs (and horses and possibly cats). Chocolate contains theobromine, a chemical stimulant that, together with caffeine and theophylline, belongs to the group of methylxanthine alkaloids. Dogs are unable to metabolize theobromine effectively. If they eat chocolate, the theobromine can remain in their bloodstream for up to 20 hours. The dog may experience a fast heart rate, hallucinations, severe diarrhea, epileptic seizures, a heart attack, internal bleeding, and eventual death.

Milk chocolate contains 44mg of theobromine per ounce, so a minimum toxic dose for a 20-pound dog is 1.3 pounds. Semi-sweet chocolate contains about 150mg of theobromine per ounce, so as little as 6.1 ounces can be lethal, and baking chocolate, at 390mg per ounce can be deadly in a minimal dose of only 2.3 ounces.

In case of accidental intake of chocolate by especially a smaller dog, contact a veterinarian or animal poison control immediately; it is commonly recommended to induce vomiting within two hours of ingestion. Large breeds are less susceptible to chocolate poisoning because of their size; however, they are still far less tolerant of the substance than humans are and if enough is eaten, can also be poisonous.

Note: Carob treats are often available as dog treats; these are unrelated to chocolate and are safe.

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