

8 known danger foods for dogs

We all give our pets a treat from the table now and then, but do you know which foods for humans are dangerous for dogs? Here's a guide to the food and drink that vets agree your dog should never have.

	Why it's dangerous	Signs and symptoms	How to take action
1 Alcohol 	Alcohol (in medicines and mouthwash as well as alcoholic beverages) contains ethanol, which is toxic for dogs because it depresses their central nervous system and can lead to cellular damage. Depending on the amount, it can be fatal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drowsiness • Lack of coordination • Urination problems and diarrhoea • Stomach pain • Dehydration • Seizures <p>In severe cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble breathing • Heart attack • Coma that can lead to brain damage or even death 	Get treatment immediately: the longer the wait, the more likely it is that your dog will lose consciousness. Your vet will do a blood test and may wash your dog's stomach or give him activated charcoal to absorb the ethanol. If the poisoning is severe and your dog is dehydrated, your vet might give him intravenous (IV) fluids for a faster recovery.
2 Bread dough or fermented foods 	Raw dough or fermented foods contain yeast – which breaks down into ethanol inside your dog's digestive system. This can lead to the same sort of poisoning as alcohol.		
3 Caffeine 	Ingesting moderate amounts of coffee grounds, tea bags or even energy drinks can raise a dog's heart rate and body temperature to unhealthy levels, and may also cause an abnormal heart rhythm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperactivity or restlessness • Vomiting and diarrhoea • Irregular heart rate • Fever • Tremors or seizures • Collapse and, in untreated cases, death 	Call your vet practice straight away. They'll be able to advise on the amount your dog has had relative to his size, whether his symptoms are severe and what steps to take next. Treatment may include activated charcoal, and medicines or IV fluids to stabilise your dog's heart rate.
4 Chocolate 	Chocolate contains both caffeine and theobromine, which can affect your dog's nervous system. As a general rule, the darker and more bitter the chocolate, the greater the danger to your dog.		
5 Macadamia nuts 	It's not known why macadamia nuts are poisonous to dogs, but even one or two (raw or roasted) can cause your dog to become ill. The nuts can affect your dog's nerve function, specifically those nerves controlling his muscles and movements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe lethargy • Fever • Stomach pain • Decreased appetite • Vomiting • Muscle tremors • Joint stiffness and temporary inability to walk (commonly seen in one or both hind legs) 	If you see any of these signs within three days of your dog eating macadamia nuts, contact your vet or poison centre right away. Your dog will need hospital care if the shaking affects his ability to eat, drink or move, or if he has a high fever. As the nuts are very fatty, in rare cases dogs may also need to be treated for inflammation of the pancreas.
6 Onions, leeks, garlic or chives 	The sulphurs found in onions, leeks, garlic and chives react with the cell membranes of a dog's red blood cells, causing them damage that can lead to anaemia (low levels of red blood cells).	The effects of small amounts might not be noticed, but the damage can build up over time. If a dog has had large amounts of these foods he'll show signs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stomach pain • Vomiting and diarrhoea • Lethargy • Increased heart rate and fast breathing • Yellowing of the skin, gums or whites of the eyes • In severe cases, anaemia may lead to internal organ damage, organ failure or even death 	Get treatment straight away. If caught early, your vet may induce vomiting or give your dog activated charcoal. In more severe cases, IV fluids (to keep your dog hydrated) and oxygen therapy are the main forms of treatment. Some pets may require a blood transfusion. The outlook is good with early treatment, but less so in severe cases or in pets that aren't seen to by a vet.
7 Raisins or grapes 	Although the exact cause of this toxic reaction in dogs isn't yet known, even small amounts of grapes or raisins can lead to kidney failure and could prove to be fatal for some dogs. While not all raisins and grapes will have similar results – and not all dogs have a reaction to them – it is much better to play it safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unusual quietness and weakness • Vomiting and diarrhoea • Dehydration • Stomach pain • Acute (sudden) kidney failure with lack of urine production 	This requires immediate treatment. Call your vet before making your way to a practice, to find out what treatment you can administer at home. If possible, try to collect a sample of your pet's vomit or diarrhoea for your vet to diagnose accurately. Your vet is likely to give your dog activated charcoal and may wash his stomach or administer IV fluids.
8 Xylitol 	A natural sugar substitute, xylitol is found in foods such as gum and nut butter. In dogs, it results in a potent release of insulin from the pancreas. This causes a rapid decrease in the dog's blood sugar levels (hypoglycaemia), which can happen within 10-60 minutes of eating xylitol. This can be life-threatening if untreated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomiting • Weakness • Lack of coordination and difficulty walking • Depression or lethargy • Tremors • In severe cases, a dog may have seizures, fall into a coma or develop liver failure 	If you suspect that your dog has eaten a product containing xylitol, get treatment for him as quickly as possible. Don't give him anything orally or induce vomiting unless specifically asked to do so by your vet. (This is because, if your dog is hypoglycaemic, inducing vomiting might make him worse.)

When in doubt: call your vet immediately, who will be able to advise you on the best course of action.

This list covers some of the more dangerous foods, but there are many that are unhealthy in other ways or over the long term. For example, foods high in salt and fat, like processed meats, could lead to an upset stomach and obesity. Ask your vet for dietary advice.