



# 7 Winter Holiday Pet Hazards

## 1 CHOCOLATE

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center receives more calls about chocolate than any other agent. Keep candy bars, snack mixes, chocolate desserts (brownies, cakes, and cookies), and baking goods such as chocolate chips and cocoa powder out of a pet's reach. With low doses of chocolate, only mild gastrointestinal (GI) upset is observed. With high enough doses, more severe signs such as rapid/irregular heartbeat, abnormal breathing, hyperthermia, tremors, and seizures can develop.

## 2 GRAPES AND RAISINS

Grapes, raisins, and zante currants belong to the genus *Vitis*, and ingestion can result in kidney damage or failure in dogs. Vomiting is common within the first 24 hours, followed by diarrhea, anorexia, lethargy, and abdominal pain.

## 3 PLANTS

Holiday plants make your home festive, but several of them can cause harm, including Christmas cactus, evergreen trees, holly, mistletoe, poinsettias, amaryllis, and Christmas kalanchoe. Exposures to Christmas cactus, evergreen trees, holly, mistletoe, and poinsettias commonly result in GI upset, but are unlikely to cause serious toxicosis. Amaryllis and Christmas kalanchoe can cause more serious signs, depending on the part of the plant the pet is exposed to and the amount ingested.

## 4 TINSEL AND GLASS ORNAMENTS

Tinsel is thin and sharp and can easily wrap itself around the intestines or ball up in the stomach once ingested, and glass ornaments can cause perforations and lacerations to pets that chew on them. Cats are especially drawn to sparkly things, so if you have a curious feline in the house, skip putting shiny tinsel on Christmas trees and stick to nonbreakable ornaments.

## 5 XYLITOL

This sugar substitute is found in some sugar-free candies, gum, and recipes. When ingested by a dog or cat, xylitol may cause vomiting, loss of coordination, seizures, and in severe cases, liver failure.

## 7 ELECTRICAL CORDS

When curious puppies and kittens chew on electrical cords they can receive an electrical shock, so place them out of your pet's reach, tape them down, or cover them in protective casing.

## 7 MEDICATIONS

Make sure bags containing prescription medications are not placed where your pets can access them. Even over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol can be dangerous to pets.

If you think your pet has ingested anything that's harmful, call your veterinarian or the [ASPCA Poison Control \(888-426-4435\)](tel:888-426-4435) right away.