

GLENDALE

VETERINARY HOSPITAL

ALL KINDS OF CARE FOR ALL KINDS OF PETS

01 Be Safe For The Holidays

Every year at this time we offer a list of the most common holiday hazards for pets: feeding problems, foreign-body ingestion and accidental poisoning.

The bad news is that many pets will end up at the veterinarian's office this holiday season. The good news is that yours won't be among them if you keep an eye out for these hazards. Be careful, and watch for:

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- **Feeding problems.** Foods too rich, too fatty or too spicy -- or anything your pet's not accustomed to -- can trigger a bout of intestinal upset. For some animals, the treat can trigger a serious inflammation of the pancreas or intestine, and that means a life-threatening illness. What to avoid? Anything you wouldn't eat your pet should avoid, too. While a little bit of meat -- beef or poultry -- won't hurt and would be appreciated, steer clear of the fatty parts and the poultry skin, which also harbors fat.
- **Foreign-body ingestion.** Cooked poultry bones may seem like the perfect gift for the pet who has everything, but do him a favor and save them for the soup. (Low-sodium poultry broth is a wonderful treat poured over your pet's regular food.) Even the largest cooked turkey bones are prone to splintering, sending shards through the animal's intestines. Should one pierce through the lining, the result can be deadly peritonitis. While cooked poultry bones are out, some raw or cooked beef bones can be safely substituted. Knuckle bones (for large dogs) and oxtails (for small ones) stand up to vigorous gnawing, providing your pet with plenty of yummy, messy fun. Supervise your dog's chewing, and throw bones out after a few hours of attention or if they get broken into pieces that can be swallowed.
- **Dangerous decorations.** The Christmas tree is full of hazards for dogs and cats. Tinsel can be an appealing target for play, but if ingested, it can twist up the intestines. This is a particular danger to cats and kittens, who seem to find tinsel -- along with yarn, ribbon and string -- especially appealing to eat. Ornaments, too, are deadly in the mouths -- and stomachs -- of pets, and even the water at the base of the tree contains secretions that can at the very least cause a stomachache. Light strings are no good for chewing, and the whole tree can come down on the cat climbing in its branches. Some dogs may even be inclined to break the rules of house-training on a freshly cut tree -- why else, they reason, would anyone bring a tree into the house? The best way to keep your pets out of tree trouble is by making the tree off-limits unless you're there to supervise. Putting the tree in a room with a door you can close is probably the easiest solution.
- **Poisonings.** Holiday plants such as mistletoe may look intriguing to your pet, but they're also toxic, as are the bulbs of the amaryllis plant. (Long the poster child for holiday poisoning, the falsely maligned poinsettia can be safely welcomed into the pet lover's home.)

And before you share your holiday candy with your pet, be aware that chocolate is toxic to dogs and may be deadly to the little dog who gets a good-sized piece. Again, the best cure is prevention: Keep all dangerous plants out of the reach of your pets, and make the candy dish available to people only.

Stay safe this holiday season! -

By Dr. Marty Becker and Gina Spadafori
For more information please call the staff at Glendale Veterinary Hospital.