

CHOCOLATE AND COCOA

Source

Chocolate and cocoa contain two compounds that are toxic to animals, caffeine and theobromine.

Typically, the darker the chocolate, the more toxic it is- from least to most toxic:

- White chocolate
- Milk chocolate- **1oz/1 pound** body weight is a toxic dose
- Semi-sweet chocolate and sweetened cocoa mix
- Cocoa beans
- Baker's chocolate- **1oz/10 pounds** body weight is a toxic dose
- Dry cocoa powder

Symptoms

- Restlessness
- Hyperactivity
- Elevated body temperature
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Seizures
- Coma

Toxicity

Both caffeine and theobromine affect the nervous system and the heart. One ounce of milk chocolate per pound of body weight can cause symptoms in cats and dogs. Higher doses or ingestion of darker chocolate can cause more severe signs. Please call a veterinary professional to see if your pet ingested a dangerous amount of chocolate or cocoa.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is based on history and clinical signs. Often candy wrappers and foil will be seen in the vomit and diarrhea after an ingestion of chocolate.

Treatment

Treatment initially consists of eliminating the chocolate from the body. This is partially accomplished by making the animal vomit (if the ingestion was within 4 hours) to help remove any remaining chocolate from the stomach. Your veterinarian may then give your pet multiple doses of an activated charcoal suspension to help prevent further absorption of any charcoal that is still in the intestinal tract or is recirculating through the body. Hospitalization for supportive care and monitoring may be necessary.

Prognosis

The prognosis in cases of chocolate toxicity is good if early and aggressive treatment is initiated.