

ASK THE VET

Rose DiLeva VMD, MS, CVCP, CVA

TOXIC SUBSTANCES

Question:

I have a cat that almost died when I accidentally gave him an aspirin for pain. He is almost 14 years old and is walking slowly these days and stopped jumping up on my bed to sleep with me. Why did this happen?

Answer:

First, it is very important not to assume that over-the-counter medications for humans can be utilized for our pets. Not only can prescription and over-the-counter drugs be toxic, but the dose that one medication may use can differ from a dog to a cat. A good case in point is your cat and aspirin. Aspirin is extremely toxic to cats if not given under strict instructions and supervision. Cats are particularly sensitive to aspirin because they lack a certain enzyme necessary in metabolism. Other over-the-counter drugs that can be toxic to cats are acetaminophen, otherwise known as Tylenol, and ibuprofen. Two doses of regular strength acetaminophen can be fatal to a cat.

Other compounds that can be toxic to your cat include methylxanthines such as caffeine; theobromine and theophylline. These are found in coffee, tea, stimulants, chocolate and different medications. Clinical signs usually start within a couple of hours following ingestion and can result in seizures and death.

Another more common cause of poisoning in cats, especially in the winter time, is ethylene glycol toxicity or antifreeze. Cats tend to like the sweet taste of it and readily ingest it. Small doses are extremely fatal in both dogs and cats.

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Although more rare, another substance toxic to cats is lead. This problem tends to arise these days from ingesting lead based paint or lead-containing dust. It can even occur if a lead contaminated coat is groomed a cat.

Zinc is another, yet rare, toxic problem with cats. Frequently, it is due to ingestion of pennies minted after 1983 when the zinc content increased or from ingesting or chewing on the nuts made of zinc in transportation crates. Some rubber products, diaper rash

products, batteries, soaps and cosmetics also contain varying quantities of this trace mineral.

Various kinds of pesticides can be harmful to your cat particularly if they are outdoors, part of the time. Pesticides such as Warfarin, Coumateryl and Brodifacoum interfere with the clotting mechanism causing bleeding in the stool or blood vessels and can lead to seizures and death. Ng potentially toxic or you gave a human medication

Any time you question whether your pet ingested something potentially toxic or you gave a human medication that you are not sure is useful in pets, please call your local veterinarian or emergency hospital immediately. Some of these substances are deadly with in hours so time is a critical factor.

Given the holiday time of year and the previous question, I am providing the reader with a partial list of plants that are potentially toxic to dogs, cats, rabbits and birds. Please remember that not all parts of a plant are toxic and the toxic dose varies from plant to plant and animal to animal.

Amaryllis spp
Andromeda Japonica

Arrow grass (leaves)
Asian Lily
Apple seeds (Malus spp.)
Arrow grass (leaves)
Avacado (esp. birds. the pit, leaves, stems)
Azalea spp.
Bird of Paradise (pods, flowers)
Buckeye spp. (nuts, seeds, sprouts)
Buckthorn spp. (esp. birds)
Caladium spp.
Calla Lily
Castor Bean
Ceriman spp
Chinese evergreen
Cherry (Prunus spp. (leaves, bark)
Cutleaf Philodendron
Clementis Montana
Cordatium spp
Cycads (Cycas revoluta)
Daffodil (Narcissus spp.)
Devil's Ivy (Epipremnum aureum)
Dieffenbachia spp. (Dumb cane)
Dracaena Palm
Dragon Tree
Easter lily
English Ivy
Elderberry (sambucus Mexicana)
Euonymus spp. (bark, leaves)

Heart Leaf Philodendron
Hyacinth spp.

Hydrangea spp
Iris spp.
Lupines (seeds, pods)
Jack-in-the-pulpit
Jerusalem cherry (Solanum spp)
Jimsonweed (Datura spp)
Japanese Show Lily
Larkspur (Delphinium spp.)
Lobelia spp.
Mistletoe (Phoradendron spp)
Marijuana
Narcissus spp.
Nephthytis spp
Oleander (Nerium oleander)
Onion
Peach (Prunus spp.pits, leaves)
Poinsettia (Euphorbia spp)
Poison Ivy
Poison Oak
Poison Sumac
Primrose (Primula spp.)
Rhododendron spp.
Red Emerald
Rosary Pea (esp. birds)
Sago Palm
Schefflera
Sweetheart Ivy
Skunk cabbage (esp. birds)

Foxglove spp (Digitalis purpurea)
Gold Dust Dracaena
German Ivy
Hurricane Plant
Holly spp. (Ilex aquifolium..leaves, berries)
Horse Chestnut (Aesculus spp.)

Tiger Lily
Tobacco
Velvet grass (leaves)
Woody aster (entire plant)
Wisteria (pods,seeds)
Yew spp

Dr. Rose DiLeva is a 1987 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's school of Veterinary Medicine. She practices alternative and conventional veterinary medicine. Dr. DiLeva is a certified veterinary acupuncturist and a certified veterinary chiropractor. She can be reached at her Animal Wellness Center in Chadds Ford, Pa. at 610-558-1616 for appointments, speaking engagements and telephone consultations. Her web site is www.altpetdoc.com.