



Dr. DiLeva with her husband and family dog

Is Peanut Butter Toxic to Your Pet?

By Dr. Rose DiLeva, VMD, MS, CVCP, CVA

About six months ago, I noticed a small article in one of my veterinary publications. It wasn't a very long article; however, after reading it I felt that it deserved much more attention and discussion. The article explained that some peanut butter companies were now adding xylitol to their ingredient list. Xylitol is an organic natural sugar alcohol that is utilized as a sweetener in numerous foods. Xylitol can be present in sugarless gum, toothpaste, candies, sugar free mints, regular mints, nasal sprays, nicotine gum, ice cream, digestive aids/antacids, pudding, Jell-O Brand sugar-free pudding, energy drinks, some chewable vitamins, beverages, baking products and some oral-care products. Most recently, a number of the manufacturers of peanut butter have elected to add xylitol to their peanut and nut butter brands.

Xylitol is not toxic to humans; however, is extremely toxic to dogs. Many dog owners use peanut butter as a treat and as a means of administering medications or supplements. Dogs absorb Xylitol

very quickly resulting in a rapid release of insulin into the body. Insulin causes an increase of glucose uptake by the liver, muscle and fat cells resulting in a decrease in blood glucose levels. This can cause severe hypoglycemia (low blood sugar level) in less than 30 minutes. Your dog may exhibit vomiting, weakness, lethargy, difficulty walking, stumbling, tremors, disorientation, collapsing, seizures and death. Additionally, at higher doses it can cause irreversible liver failure. The toxic dose of Xylitol is based on the amount of peanut butter ingested and the weight of the dog. The outcome is dependent on the amount ingested, the weight of the dog, and the time between ingestion and treatment. Dogs that get to the point of liver failure have a very poor prognosis.

Many veterinarians and pet owners have asked if Xylitol is toxic to cats. It is thought that it is toxic to cats. However, cats do not particularly like its sweet taste. It can cause that same release of insulin and hypoglycemia that occurs in dogs. According to the Pet Poison Helpline, it is best to contact them directly or your veterinarian for advice. **The Pet Poison Helpline's number is (800) 213-6680.** This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for a nominal fee.

This type of situation should encourage pet owners to READ LABELS! Some companies that manufacture products containing xylitol utilize other names that can be listed on an ingredient label. Xylitol may be listed as Euit, Kannit, Newtol, Xylite, Torch, or Xyliton. This is extremely important information to get out to the public. Many of my clients take a photo of these names so they can refer to it when at the food store. Then they can check the ingredient label. If any of these names are listed DO NOT give this to your pet. Many of my own clients were not aware of this information and were very appreciative to be informed. I recommended that they tell everyone they know with dogs or cats to raise awareness. You should do the same.



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