



Chocolate Toxicity in Dogs

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Overview

Chocolate is toxic to dogs and cats because it contains **theobromine** and caffeine — two methylxanthines that dogs and cats metabolize far more slowly than humans. The result is overstimulation of the cardiovascular and nervous systems. Toxicity depends on the type of chocolate, the amount consumed, and the animal's size. Dark chocolate and baking chocolate are dramatically more dangerous than milk chocolate.

■ There is no truly "safe" amount of chocolate for dogs. Small dogs can develop toxic effects from a single square of dark chocolate.

Warning Signs

Signs appear within 6–12 hours of ingestion and may continue for up to 72 hours:

■ Vomiting and diarrhea (often first signs)

■ Excessive thirst and urination

■ Restlessness, pacing, hyperactivity

■ Muscle tremors or rigidity

■ Rapid or irregular heartbeat

■ Seizures

■ Collapse

Theobromine Content by Chocolate Type

■ The darker the chocolate, the higher the theobromine concentration. Baking chocolate is 10× more toxic than milk chocolate by weight.

White chocolate	~0.25 mg/oz	Very low — primarily fat/sugar toxicity risk
Milk chocolate	~44–58 mg/oz	Toxic dose: ~1 oz per lb body weight (dog)
Dark chocolate (50–70%)	~130–160 mg/oz	Toxic dose: ~0.3 oz per lb body weight
Baking / unsweetened	~390–450 mg/oz	Highly toxic — even small amounts dangerous
Cocoa powder	~400–737 mg/oz	Extremely concentrated — most dangerous form



Cocoa mulch	Variable	Garden mulch — dogs commonly eat it; very dangerous
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■ What to Do If Your Pet Ate Chocolate

- Note the type and estimated amount of chocolate consumed
- Note your pet's weight
- Call your vet or ASPCA Poison Control: (888) 426-4435
- Do NOT induce vomiting at home without veterinary guidance — it can cause additional harm in some situations
- Go to the ER immediately if any symptoms are present or if a large/unknown amount was consumed

■ When to See a Veterinarian

■ **THIS IS A VETERINARY EMERGENCY — GO NOW.** If your pet is showing any of the signs described in this guide, stop reading and drive directly to your nearest 24-hour emergency vet. Do not wait until morning. Do not call first. **Go immediately.**

■ Veterinary Treatment

- Induced vomiting if ingestion was recent (within 1–2 hours) and no symptoms present
- Activated charcoal to bind remaining theobromine in the GI tract
- IV fluids to support kidney function and speed elimination
- Anti-seizure medications if tremors or seizures occur
- Heart rhythm monitoring (ECG) for severe cases
- Hospitalization for 24–48 hours in moderate to severe cases

■ Prevention

✓ Store all chocolate — including baking supplies — in closed, latched cabinets. Dogs are highly motivated to find and eat chocolate and can open bags, boxes, and drawers.

■ Final Summary

When in doubt, go. The ER can calculate the dose, assess risk, and decontaminate before symptoms start. Waiting for symptoms to appear means treatment will be more difficult.

■ **THIS IS A VETERINARY EMERGENCY — GO NOW.** If your pet is showing any of the signs described in this guide, stop reading and drive directly to your nearest 24-hour emergency vet. Do not wait until morning. Do not call first. **Go immediately.**



■ **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center:** (888) 426-4435 — 24/7, fee may apply. Save this number now. [aspca.org/apcc](https://www.asPCA.org/apcc)

■ **Pet Poison Helpline:** (855) 764-7661 — 24/7, fee may apply. [petpoisonhelpline.com](https://www.petpoisonhelpline.com)

■ **Related XVC Guides:**

- [Xylitol Poisoning](#) · [Grape & Raisin Toxicity](#) · [Common Household Toxins](#)
- [When to Go to the Emergency Vet](#) · [NYC Emergency Vet Hospitals](#)



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