



CHOCOLATE TOXICITY

Sometimes we eat chocolate plain. Sometimes we eat it baked into cakes, mixed into ice cream etc. The first problem with these sweets is the fat. A sudden high fat meal (such as demolishing a bag of chocolate bars left accessible at Halloween time) can create a lethal metabolic disease called "pancreatitis." Vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain are just the beginning of this disaster. Remember, in the case of pancreatitis, it is the fat that causes the problem more than the chocolate itself.

The fat and sugar in the chocolate can create an unpleasant but temporary upset stomach. This is what happens in most chocolate ingestion cases.

Chocolate is, however, directly toxic because of the theobromine. The more chocolate liquor, the more theobromine is present. This makes baking chocolate the worst, followed by semisweet and dark chocolate, followed by milk chocolate, followed by chocolate flavored cakes or cookies. Theobromine causes:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Hyperactivity
- Tremors
- Seizures
- Racing heart rhythm progressing to abnormal rhythms
- Death in severe cases

Toxic doses of theobromine are 9mg per pound of dog for mild signs up to 18 mg per pound of dog for severe signs. Milk chocolate contains 44mg/ounce of theobromine while semisweet chocolate contains 150mg/ounce, and baking chocolate contains 390 mg/ounce.

It takes nearly 4 days for the effects of chocolate to work its way out of a dog's system. If the chocolate was only just eaten it may be possible to induce vomiting with hydrogen peroxide otherwise, hospitalization and support are needed until the chocolate has worked its way out of the system.