

Common Feline Toxic Encounters

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We've all heard that chocolate is toxic to cats and dogs. But there are other household medications and plants that are much more dangerous to your cat that you may not be aware of.

One of the most plants your cat could have contact with is a lily. Any true lily—the day lily, Easter lily, tiger lily, or the Japanese show lilies, can be highly toxic. If a cat ingests any part of the plant, or even licks a small amount of the pollen, there is the chance of it causing acute kidney failure. Typically, you will see vomiting, poor appetite and depression initially. You may see parts of the plant in the vomit, or pollen on your cat's fur. If you suspect that your cat has gotten in to a lily plant, please call the hospital immediately for care. Generally, if treatment is started in less than 12 hours after getting into the plant the prognosis is very good. We will recommend blood and urine tests and administer activated charcoal to bind up any remaining toxin in the stomach or intestinal tract. Then, your pet will remain with us for 48 hours receiving fluids to help flush out the toxins. Before sending your cat home we will recheck the blood work to ensure that the kidney functions are still normal. If there is no indication of damage to the kidneys after 48 hours, there should be no long term effects.

For our cats that go outside, and those that live with dogs, fighting fleas can be a big headache. Luckily there are many topical spot-on treatments to help in this battle (we strongly recommend Revolution or Advantage Multi). The problem is is that there are some products out there that can be toxic to cats. Products labeled for dogs should NEVER be used on cats and even some products labeled for cats can be toxic if they contain pyrethrins or permethrins. These chemicals can cause mild muscle twitching, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, tremors, fever and even seizures. If

your cat accidentally is treated with one of these products, or ingests some of the product off of your dog, please call us. If they've been treated with the product, we will bathe them to remove any product from their coat and skin. For milder cases, we generally treat with a muscle relaxant and fluids. In severe cases we may need to treat seizures. In all but the most severe cases, symptoms usually resolve within 24 hours and patients are able to go home with no further problems.

Keeping our cats comfortable is what we all strive for. And sometimes, not knowing what else we can do to ease our friend's pain, we may reach for a human medication. It's also not unheard of that when we are taking our own medication and accidentally drop a pill, our cat may quickly ingest it with or without our knowledge. One of the most common household medications that is also one of the most toxic, is Tylenol (acetaminophen) – or any of the acetaminophen containing meds such as Excedrin, Fioricet, Percocet, Vicodin, etc. Cat's bodies aren't able to process the acetaminophen. This leads to a disease process called methemoglobinemia—a disease that affects the red blood. Signs of Tylenol poisoning include bluish/purple gums and tongue, difficulty breathing or rapid breathing, weakness, and swelling for face and/or paws. You might also notice that your cat's urine is brown in color. If you suspect that your cat has ingested acetaminophen, call the hospital immediately. If it has just occurred we will cause him/her to vomit when you get here. After that point we will administer doses of activated charcoal to bind any remaining toxin left in the GI tract. We will place your cat on fluids for support. The mainstay of treatment will be administering a special medication in multiple doses over 2 days while your pet is in the hospital. Other supportive measures may be taken if needed for each individual patient. If a patient is treated early and aggressively, the prognosis is generally good.