

Human foods with toxic consequences for your cat

Most pet owners are aware that certain human foods are toxic to dogs, but there are many more who will not be aware that cats too can be poisoned by foods commonly found in our homes.

As part of the charity International Cat Care's Keeping Cats Safe campaign, the danger to cats from certain household foods is being highlighted.

Unlike most dogs, cats are relatively discerning when it comes to what they eat, which is why severe poisoning from human foods in cats is rare. However, exposure to toxic human foods does still occasionally happen. Cats may eat human foodstuffs through inquisitiveness or by being fed inappropriate food by owners. Food is readily available in the home and is often left unattended or improperly stored, and many cats like to investigate shopping bags, fruit bowls and waste bins.

Foods that are toxic to cats include chocolate (especially dark chocolate), allium species (onions, garlic, leeks, spring onions and chives), grapes (including raisins, sultanas and currants) and alcohol, as well as gone-off or mouldy foods, including some dairy products, bread, rice, fruit and nuts.

In the case of alcohol (ethanol), owners should be aware that toxicity might not just occur from the ingestion of traditional alcoholic drinks but also from alcohol-containing products such as surgical spirit and alcohol hand gels. Indirect exposure is the most likely way in which cats become poisoned by allium species. Onions and garlic may not be attractive to cats on their own, however they are frequently present in soups, baby foods, seasoning, stock cubes, sauces and marinades, chutneys and many ready meals, and poisonings have occurred following the ingestion of these foodstuffs particularly where meat and/or meatflavourings are the main constituent. Effects of allium poisoning can occur from a single large dose or smaller repeated dosing and can even result in anaemia in the cat.

General signs of poisoning from the ingestion of toxic human foods include vomiting, diarrhoea, excessive drinking, lethargy, disorientation, rapid heart rate and breathing, depression or hyperactivity, and in severe cases convulsions. If an owner knows or suspects that their cat has ingested a toxic food or drink, veterinary attention should be sought immediately. Treatment and outcome will depend on the type of poisoning and the severity of the toxicity. Fortunately severe cases in cats are rare.

For more information about the risks of certain human foods and what the signs of poisoning are, see: <http://icatcare.org/advice/keeping-cats-safe-campaign/toxic-human-foods>

This campaign is being run with the support of Agria Pet Insurance and the Veterinary Poisons Information Service. Full details about the campaign can be found at:

<http://icatcare.org/keeping-cats-safe>



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