



Always consult with a veterinarian that you feel comfortable with before diagnosing or treating any disease on your own. This information is for reference only.

[www.furrycritter.com](http://www.furrycritter.com)

## Chocolate Poisoning

### Issue Description

*A common cause of poisoning in dogs. The toxic principles in chocolate are theobromine and caffeine.*

### Other Names

*Theobromine Poisoning*

### Causes

Theobromine is especially toxic to horses, dogs, parrots, voles, and cats because they are unable to metabolize the chemical effectively. If they are fed chocolate, the theobromine will remain in their bloodstream for up to 20 hours. Medical treatment performed by a veterinarian involves inducing vomiting within two hours of ingestion and administration of benzodiazepines or barbiturates for seizures, antiarrhythmics for heart arrhythmias, and fluid diuresis.

A typical 20 kg (44 lb) dog will normally experience intestinal distress after eating less than 240 g (8.5 oz) of dark chocolate, but won't necessarily experience bradycardia or tachyarrhythmia unless it eats at least a half a kilogram (1.1 lb) of milk chocolate. According to the Merck Veterinary Manual, approximately 1.3g of baker's chocolate per kilogram of a dog's body weight (0.02 oz/lb) is sufficient to cause symptoms of toxicity. For example, a typical 25 gram (1 oz) baker's chocolate bar would be enough to bring out symptoms in a 20 kg (44 lb) dog.

### Symptoms

Poison by chocolate can occur quickly if your dog had a large amount, but sometimes even small amounts will show signs of poisoning within a few short hours. Symptoms include vomiting and diarrhea, restlessness and hyperactivity, and he or she might even go to you for help and answers. Symptoms will progressively get worse from restlessness to arrhythmia and other muscle twitching. Frequent urination is common, a direct side effect of the toxin in chocolate. If you know your dog had chocolate and even the first signs develop, call a veterinarian right away. If you are unaware of your dog eating chocolate but develop these symptoms, this might also be a sign of another poison and you need to find a doctor immediately. If symptoms in chocolate poisoning don't decrease at this point, they will probably increase to hyperthermia and seizures, which can quickly escalate to a coma. Death follows shortly.

### Treatment

There is no specific antidote for this poisoning. And the half life of the toxin is 17.5 hours in dogs. Induce vomiting in the first 1-2 hours if the quantity is unknown. Administering activated charcoal may inhibit absorption of the toxin. An anticonvulsant might be indicated if neurological signs are present and needs to be controlled. Oxygen therapy, intravenous medications, and fluids might be needed to protect the heart.

Milk chocolate will often cause diarrhea 12-24 hours after ingestion. This should be treated symptomatically (fluids, etc..) to prevent dehydration.

If you suspect your pet has ingested chocolate contact your Vet immediately! They can help you determine the proper treatment for your pet.

*The material and information on this website, including any merchandise, information or service provided through this website, is provided "as is" with all faults and without warranty of any kind from the Furry Critter Network, expressed or implied. In no event shall the Furry Critter Network be liable for any direct damages, special, incidental or consequential damages, lost profits, or any indirect damages arising from the use or inability to use this website, even if the Furry Critter Network has been informed of the possibility thereof.*