

## Why chocolate is poisonous to dogs



The culprit is a compound called theobromine which causes cardiac, kidney and neurological dysfunction in dogs. Chocolate poisoning symptoms develop between four and 24 hours after consumption, initially including diarrhoea, vomiting and hyperactivity.

## Symptoms of chocolate poisoning

As theobromine is absorbed into the bloodstream, an affected dog may experience increased heart rate (which can cause arrhythmia), muscle twitching, increased urination and excessive panting (which may lead to hyperthermia) muscle tremors, seizures, coma and, ultimately, death.

## What to do if your dog accidentally eats chocolate

The following steps will help your vet calculate whether your dog has consumed a toxic dose of chocolate and assist the treatment plan:

- Get your dog to your vet as soon as you become aware they've eaten chocolate.
- Tell your vet how much chocolate your dog has eaten.
- Pinpoint when your dog ate the chocolate.
- Be specific about the type of chocolate your dog has eaten (show the vet chocolate wrappers or box if you can so that they can see the ingredients).

## Treatment for chocolate poisoning



There is no antidote to theobromine so in most cases your vet will make the dog vomit. They may also flush out your pet's stomach and feed the animal activated charcoal to absorb any residual theobromine.

Treatment might also include intravenous fluids and heart, blood pressure and seizure medication.

If you are a long distance from veterinary help, you can make up a solution of strong salt water and force it in to the dog orally, or a small handful of plain washing soda crystals (eg electric soda) straight down the hatch, should induce vomiting within minutes.

While chocolate ingestion can cause significant stress on your dog's system, prompt intervention and treatment results in a positive prognosis for poisoned dogs - even in cases where a large amount of chocolate has been ingested.

**Did you know...** *Due to the concentration of Theobromine in dark chocolate, toxicity is up to four times more severe in dark chocolate than it is in milk chocolate?*