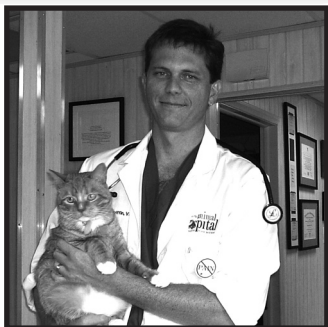


# VETERINARY

**Q:** This is our first Halloween with our Lab/mix "George" and our new cat - "Penny" we would like to know what treats we can share with them. Both our pets love anything sweet and sit and beg whenever we have dessert. Can you give us a list of safe candy treats?



**William Griffin, VMD**

**A:** Dear Sweet Tooth, We all look forward to the holiday season, and no matter what holiday you celebrate chances are you will do it with food. Just as with our children and ourselves, moderation is the key - with some deadly exceptions - and knowing what these exceptions are just might be the difference between a happy holiday and a tragic one.

Most people realize that chocolate can be toxic when ingested by dogs (cats don't usually eat chocolate). Clinical signs can be mild, ranging from vomiting and diarrhea and they can be severe, such as seizures, coma and even death. Many factors influence the type of severity of toxicity. Dark chocolate and baking chocolate are the most toxic since they have the highest levels of methylxanthines and caffeine. Milk chocolate and white chocolate have the least, and therefore least toxic. Weight, age and health also have a significant impact on how the ingestion of chocolate will effect your dog. So, the safest plan when it comes to dogs and chocolate, it is no chocolate at all. If you have chocolate in the house, make sure that it is well out of reach of pets to avoid unintentional ingestion. If your dog does eat chocolate, call your veterinarian immediately for medical advice.

Other possible toxins that your pet may find around the holidays include lilies and poinsettias for cats and grapes, raisins and macadamia nuts for dogs. Raw onions should never be fed to dogs or cats. And all pets, especially young dogs and cats are susceptible to the dangers of holiday decorations. The ingestion of ribbons, strings ornaments, garland or a new pair of slippers can lead to obstruction of the stomach and intestines usually requiring emergency surgery to remove the foreign material.

While other holiday sweets and treats don't pose such toxic potential as chocolate, they can lead to diarrhea, vomiting and hyperactivity. In addition, the long term effects of a sweet tooth can cause obesity. Recent studies show that obesity in pets can shorten their life by 20% and lead to crippling arthritis.

So, what to do in celebration of the holidays? The best treat for your best friends is always your love and attention, you can never have too much of those!

Happy Holidays!

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Christopher Lindquist, VMD  
4250 Black Horse Pike, Rte. 42  
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