



'Tis' the Season for Pets Swallowing Holiday Objects



It's that time of year again-beautiful decorations hanging wall-to-wall and scrumptious food filling our stomachs. But did you know it's also the time of year cats and dogs are at risk for filling their own tummies with troublesome treats and trimmings?

To help reduce the risks and make sure this truly is "the most wonderful time of the year," our veterinary team is sharing our most essential checklist of potential holiday safety hazards.

FOOD

Table Scraps: It's natural to want to include our pets in festivities, but it's often safest to keep our them away from table scraps. Some pet parents may not think of people food as being a health hazard, but West Chelsea's Dr. Michael Farber begs to differ. "Pets that are sick from eating fatty, 'people food' are easily some of the most prominent cases vets often see during the holiday season." Sneaking your pets table scraps can cause vomiting, diarrhea and even pancreatitis. "My best advice is to think twice about slipping furry family members a holiday scrap this season."

Chocolate: For chocoholics, what would the holidays be if there weren't chocolate chip cookies, hot cocoa and delectable morsels to snack on? Pets who ingest chocolate, can show symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, thirst and even difficulty keeping balance. Dark chocolate and baking chocolate are often many times more

poisonous than milk chocolate. So, do your pets a favor and keep them clear of this sweet treat!

FOLIAGE

Seasonal Holiday Plants: Festive foliage can be beautiful to see, but poinsettias and holly can pose serious threats to pets' health. "Both have been found to cause mouth irritation, drooling, vomiting and diarrhea in dogs," says Dr. Farber. "For cats, the ingestion of lilies can even cause the risk of kidney failure."

Christmas Tree Water: Thirsty pets can often be spotted sipping where they shouldn't. While Christmas tree water isn't necessarily poisonous, the additives people often use to keep trees fresher can be. "If you use this mixture, be sure to keep the stand securely covered," adds Dr. Farber. "This water can be extra tempting to pets because it tastes like tea, but can be harmful to pets' digestive tracts."

DECORATIONS

Ornaments & Tinsel: Bright, twinkling ornaments can entice young, curious and playful pets and, if broken, can leave your pets with a mouth full of glass. Ornaments of all sizes can be choking risks and if swallowed, can wreak havoc on pets' gastrointestinal tracts. "Tinsel is always at the top of the holiday hazards list and when ingested, can cause pets' intestines to become wrapped in a knot, often requiring surgery, which is probably not anyone's idea of a happy holiday," Dr. Farber warns.

Cords & Tree Lights: While bright and colorful strings of lights can set quite the holiday mood, it's important to be conscious of pets' chewing tendencies. Our vets recommend placing cords out of pets' reach, preventing electric shock or burning. It's essential to make sure pets aren't left alone to chew on loose cords.

To ensure you and your loved ones enjoy the most relaxing holiday season possible take a moment to pet proof your festivities and call us at (212) 645-2767 if you suspect your pets have ingested something they shouldn't have.



Dear West Chelsea Veterinary: Snuffing for Sidewalk Snacks

We received a question from our client, Sara M., regarding her pug Tess, whom she refers to as "Omnivore Pug." If you walk your dog on the streets of New York City, you never know what your pets will sniff or eat. Sara's question is a relevant real-life topic for our clients, so here goes...

Thanks for the great question! You are not alone. It is very common for dogs to eat all kinds of things, including feces and other canine delicacies that dogs find simply irresistible during neighborhood walks and around the house. "It is unlikely that this type of behavior is caused by a nutritional deficiency, assuming that Tess is otherwise healthy and is being fed a well-balanced diet," explains West Chelsea's Dr. Bridget Halligan. "You have to remember that this is a dog and a lot of them are very food driven," she adds. "New York City streets are literally a smorgasbord for dogs that love to eat. It's not necessarily abnormal behavior."

Here are a few tips from Dr. Halligan:

- If Tess likes to carry her toys with her, you might consider taking a toy along on walks.
- Bring acceptable treats on your walks to help distract Tess from wanting "street treats."
- Be vigilant! Keep your eyes peeled and scour the ground you are about to cover to try to avoid any trouble spots.

Thanks for your question and hang in there!

~ Dr. Halligan and West Chelsea Vet



Dear West Chelsea Veterinary,

What do you do with a dog who eats everything imaginable off the street? I'm testing different food combos, unscientifically, and I'm not sure if I'm making a difference that much, although sometimes it gets better. My dog walker thinks it is a 'psychological' problem, like human obsessive-compulsive disorder! Well, sometimes it seems that way. I'm sure my pug isn't the only dog who manically eats off the street - anything, including feces!! Could it be a health issue or a lack of something nutritional in her diet?

~ Sara

Animals on the Baseball Field

Their motto is "1, 2, 3 Go Animals!" and they've played together for three years as West Chelsea Veterinary's own sponsored little league baseball team. The Animals recently clawed their way to place second in their little league summer season and in the championship game. "They lost by just one run and to an excellent team," says scorekeeper Liz Luboja (also West Chelsea Vet's practice manager!). According to Liz, "They're really good kids who play hard, always pick each other up and have a blast playing the game they love. We're very proud to sponsor this team." West Chelsea Vet's Michael Farber, DVM, is a team coach along with Tommy Gonzales and Jon Auerbach. Go Animals!

