

The K-9 Killer

When you kick back on the couch, does your dog often plant herself next to you, hoping that part of your dessert will fall to the floor and become her next treat? Most dogs do just that. After all, dogs are kind of like toddlers, willing to put anything in their mouths no matter what it is. Unfortunately, that carefree, try-anything-once attitude that we all love about dogs can oftentimes be the very thing that kills them.

How, you ask, could canine curiosity be so deadly? One word: Xylitol (pronounced Ziy-li-tol). Xylitol is a sweetener found in many human foods and products. Commonly used in sugar-free items, such as chocolate and gum, xylitol is also often in chewable vitamins, toothpaste, peanut butter, and even baked goods. It goes without saying that keeping pets away

from these items is the easiest way to prevent accidental xylitol poisoning. And that may be quite difficult if you have a dog with a big sweet tooth, but keep in mind that xylitol can be tricky; it is often in things you don't suspect. In fact, it may be relatively easy to overlook the ingredient

and cause serious harm to your canine companion. Have you ever snuck a necessary medication to your dog in a glob of yummy peanut butter? Uh-oh...what if that peanut butter happened to contain xylitol? And we all know that our vets remind us of the importance of brushing our pets' teeth at our exams...Well, what if you thought using human toothpaste would work just fine? Yikes...human toothpaste can contain xylitol too. No matter how well-meaning, your best defense is to read every label, as even a small amount of xylitol can be deadly.



What makes this substance so dangerous to dogs, but safe for humans? Xylitol is absorbed far more quickly by dogs than by humans, so the rush of insulin can cause a quick drop in blood sugar, followed by liver failure and death. While the FDA hasn't documented xylitol toxicity in cats, this may be simply because cats are not as tempted by sweets as dogs seem to be. The best course of action for cat owners is to err on the side of caution and keep them away from curious kitties.

The signs of xylitol poisoning can begin within minutes or as much as an hour following ingestion. Look for vomiting, decreased activity, weakness, staggering, lack of coordination, and seizures. Xylitol poisoning is an emergency. Immediately get them to a veterinarian.



Want to know more about the dangers of xylitol? Visit the FDA's website at

<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm499988.htm>.