

# Holiday Hazards

The United Emergency Animal Clinic, Inc., of Campbell has compiled this list of potential holiday hazards. Take a moment to review this list and have a safe and happy holiday season!

## Chocolate:

Chocolate contains several compounds related to caffeine that can cause hyperexcitability, irritability, even convulsions and death in dogs if enough is consumed. A 5 lb. puppy can die from eating one 5 oz. candy bar, although signs of overdosage occur at amounts far less than this. Because several family members may inadvertently cause an overdose by each giving a pet a small amount, we recommend that you avoid this risk by not giving any chocolate treats. (Give hugs instead of treats!)

## Christmas Tree Water, Pine Cones and Pine Needles:

The water at the base of a Christmas tree, the pine cones and the needles of the tree contain various compounds that can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea in some pets if swallowed. Cover the water the tree sits in with a screen that will prevent pets from drinking it.

## Holly:

Ingestion of holly leaves can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps, and also causes severe central nervous system depression in dogs and cats.

## Mistletoe:

American mistletoe contains compounds known as tryamines. While it is unlikely that a pet would ingest enough of the leaves or berries of this plant to develop a toxic reaction, you should be aware that abdominal cramps, vomiting, and diarrhea are all signs that may occur. Some pets may even begin panting and become delirious.

## Poinsettia:

This plant produces a milky sap that is irritating to the tissues of the eyes, skin and digestive system. Puppies, kittens, and birds may chew and swallow the leaves of these plants, resulting in stomatitis (pain and inflammation in the mouth) and general digestive upset, including diarrhea and vomiting.

## Tinsel, Ornaments and Garlands:

Cats and dogs are attracted by the sparkling appearance of these decorations. Their long, string-like structure can cause them to become lodged in the digestive system, causing severe upset and potentially death if they lead to the development of a tear in the intestinal wall. Do not leave stray tinsel or garlands lying around on the floor. Decorations on low hanging branches are also hazards.

## Turkey Skins, Fatty and Spicy Foods:

These foods have the potential for causing a disease called pancreatitis. The intense abdominal pain associated with this inflammatory condition of the pancreas causes many dogs and cats to vomit and appear depressed and listless. This disease can lead to shock and potentially death, and should be treated immediately. Table scraps may contain bones which may splinter in the animal's intestine and cause peritonitis, which is deadly. Again, in place of table scraps, give hugs.

## Christmas Lights and Ornaments:

Low hanging lights and ornaments are inviting toys for dogs and cats. Severe burns around the the mouth and even death from electrocution can occur if pets chew on tree lights. Glass ornaments and their hooks may also cause internal damage if swallowed as they may become lodged in the digestive system.

## Antifreeze:

Antifreeze contains ethylene glycol which makes it taste sweet to pets. It is deadly even in small amounts. Signs of poisoning include: vomiting, uncoordinated gait, weakness, coma. Immediate treatment is critical, as death can occur in 12 to 36 hours.