

Holiday Hazards

The holidays are meant to be happy and filled with joy! The last thing you want is an emergency trip to the veterinarian. If you plan ahead and keep in mind some tips, you can be sure your festivities will be filled with happy memories...and kitty will have a fabulous holiday too! Here are some potential hazards you need to be aware of:

Food

- Rich, fatty foods, like gravy or grease, can cause pain, vomiting, diarrhea and dehydration.
- Alcohol can cause serious intoxications in pets. Cats are often attracted by the sweet taste of drinks, especially eggnog.
- Chocolate, coffee, and tea all contain dangerous components called xanthines, which cause nervous system or urinary system damage and heart muscle stimulation. If a cat has ingested chocolate, signs can range from diarrhea to seizures and death.
- Uncooked meat, fish, and poultry can contain disease-causing bacteria, such as E. coli, and parasites such as Toxoplasma gondii. Bones from fish, meat, or poultry can also cause problems if swallowed.
- Tobacco products can be fatal to pets, if ingested. Signs of poisoning develop within 15 to 45 minutes and include excitation, salivation, vomiting, and diarrhea. Pets may develop seizures, collapse and die from cardiac arrest. Keep cigarettes, cigars, tobacco, nicotine gum and patches, and ashtrays out of the reach of pets. Empty ashtrays frequently since cigarette butts contain about 25% of the total nicotine in a cigarette.
- Uncooked yeast dough can expand and produce gas in the digestive system, causing pain and possible rupture of the stomach or intestines.
- Grapes and raisins contain an unknown toxin, which can damage the kidneys.
- Meat-soaked strings from rump roasts if ingested can cause a surgical emergency called a 'linear string foreign body' in the intestines.

Poisonous Plants

- If ingested, holly (leaves and berries) causes stomach upset and can be potentially fatal to both cats and dogs. Mistletoe upsets stomachs and can cause heart collapse, while hibiscus may cause diarrhea. Poinsettias have an irritating sap that can cause blistering in the mouth and stomach upset. [View a list of plants that are poisonous.](#)

Decorations and Wrappings

- Ribbons, yarn, and string can cause intestinal obstruction and bunching of the intestine along the length of the string.
- Adhesives and glues can be toxic.
- Potpourri contains oils that can be toxic to cats
- Never have candles burning in reach of pets as candles can cause burns and fires.
- Glass balls and ornaments if knocked off and broken can splinter and cause cuts or if ingested, a dire emergency.



Gifts

- Food in baskets could be attractive and opened up by the cat - that includes meats, cheese, chocolate and more.
- Ribbons and bows on baskets and boxes are attractive "toys" so you need to be careful about any decorations and wrappings
- Perfumes and aftershaves contain ethanol (alcohol), and perfume also contains essential oils which can be very toxic to cats if ingested.
- Batteries for toys or other gifts can be toxic and cause intestinal obstruction.

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Christmas Trees

- Make sure the stand is stabilized so it won't tip over in case kitty wants to bat around some balls or jump in the tree
- Use only unbreakable balls, no tinsel or garland, or any other decorations that could injure your cat if broken or ingested
- Real trees cause problems with their sharp needles, and the sap when seeped into the water can cause digestive problems and even death if the water is ingested.
- The wires of artificial trees or lights on any tree can cause injury or death if chewed
- Sugar-based tree preservatives are potential danger because of bacterial buildup.



Visitors

- Keep your kitty in another room where visitors cannot open the door and let them out. Put their water, food, bed and pan back in the room so they feel safe.
- If you travel out of town and someone cat sits, make sure they keep kitty in their one room and leave good instructions and all of their food, treats, etc they would need to have a happy time while you're gone.

Pet Gifts and Treats

- Check for small parts or pieces that could be broken or chewed off, and swallowed
- Choose healthy treats and give in small amounts