



XYLITOL – MORE DANGEROUS TO DOGS THAN CHOCOLATE

What is Xylitol and how would my dog get access?

Xylitol is a “sugar alcohol” and is used as a natural sugar substitute and because it has anti-cavity properties for us humans, it is being used more and more widely. Chances are there is Xylitol in your pantry, medicine cupboard or even your pocket/handbag/purse right now. It’s safe for people and is found in some sugar-free gums and sweets, mints, some toothpaste, mouthwash, nasal sprays, dental floss, some medications (particularly liquids), supplements and chewable vitamins. It is also used as a sugar substitute in baked goods and foods including some spreads including peanut paste. Most of the supermarket brands of peanut paste in Australia are so far safe but is contained in some brands available online or from health food stores such as ‘Nuts N More’. It is also a humectant which means it has moisturising properties and is finding its way into hair and cosmetic products including lip balms, moisturisers and deodorants. The best rule of thumb is to check food labels for Xylitol (or additive number 967) however not all sources will be obvious.

So what does it cause in dogs?

Xylitol causes a huge release of insulin in dogs and they only need to consume a tiny amount (0.1g/kg) to cause a life-threatening drop in blood sugar. This happens quite quickly and signs such as vomiting, weakness or lethargy to collapse, coma or seizures can happen within 30 minutes. If that isn’t enough, if they were to consume 0.5g/kg, (also a tiny amount), this is sufficient to cause acute liver failure which can be fatal. We estimate Xylitol to be 100 times more toxic than chocolate to dogs and a few pieces of gum may be enough to kill a small dog.

How do I prevent this from happening?

- Be careful where you leave your briefcase, purse, backpack or any bag that could contain gum, mints, or even hand cream, deodorant or lip balm.
- Be careful of where you store baked goods and pantry items particularly if you do any sugar-free baking in your home or anyone in the home is diabetic.
- If you brush your dog’s teeth, be sure to use a pet-specific toothpaste.
- Take care when out on walks or visiting friend’s homes.
- Check the ingredient label of any product you buy and use extreme caution using and storing products that contain Xylitol around your dog. If you conduct a Xylitol treasure hunt throughout your home, you may be surprised how many rooms and places it can be found. We were.
- Help friends and family members with dogs to know of the risks. There are reported to be over 700 products on the market containing this additive and the list is growing.
- Petition manufacturers to put warning labels on their products and increase dog owner awareness

What to do if your dog has eaten any Xylitol or this is suspected?

- As it is toxic in very small quantities and acts quickly, if you suspect your dog has eaten anything that may contain Xylitol, seek immediate veterinary advice.
- If your dog gets into any gum, mints, or any other food, check the ingredient label straight away and contact your nearest veterinary centre.
- Your vet will induce vomiting if safe to do so to remove as much of the material as possible.
- Supportive care such as glucose containing drips and liver protectant drugs can be given with immediate recognition of the danger and prompt treatment making the biggest difference.