



## VALENTINE'S CHOCOLATE IS NOT FOR THE DOGS

Give chocolate to loved ones on Valentine's Day and you could end up poisoning them. That is, if the loved one are your pets. The Absecon veterinary Hospital warns that small amounts of theobromine, an ingredient in chocolate, can cause vomiting and restlessness in pets. Larger doses can be fatal.

While most pet owners expect a dog to develop an upset stomach after eating a large amount of chocolate, few realize its toxic potential. The lethal dose of theobromine depends on the size of the dog and the type of chocolate. Ounce for ounce, baking chocolate has six to nine times as much of the substance as milk chocolate does. Estimates of the smallest amounts that can be fatal are:

- ♥ 4 to 10 oz of milk chocolate or 1 to 2 oz of baking chocolate for small dogs, such as chihuahuas and toy poodles.
- ♥ 1 to 1½ pounds of milk chocolate or 2 to 3 oz of baking chocolate for medium size dogs, such as cocker spaniels and dachshunds.
- ♥ 2 to 4½ pounds of milk chocolate or 4 to 8 oz of baking chocolate for large dogs, such as collies and Labrador retrievers.

Cats, as well as small mammals (rabbits, ferrets, etc.), have much different eating habits and seldom are poisoned by chocolate.

While a very small amount of chocolate may not harm some dogs, it's safest to avoid giving it to them at all. If an accident occurs, a veterinarian should be consulted immediately. Treatment may require inducing vomiting, stabilizing the animal's heartbeat and respiration, controlling seizures, and slowing the absorption of theobromine. If the animal already is comatose, its stomach may need to be pumped or other emergency measures taken.