

My Labrador retriever chews everything! My father just moved in with my family and he takes a lot of medications. I am worried that my dog will get into his medicine and eat them. How do I know which ones are harmful to dogs? What can I do to keep everyone safe?

Years ago the most common toxic things for pets to get into were yard and household chemicals and rat poison. Now we see a lot more toxic reactions from pets eating their owner's medications. There is also a big increase in dogs getting sick from eating marijuana they find in the house.

While pets may be prescribed a human medication to treat a medical condition if there is not an appropriate veterinary one, the dosages and effects may be very different. Did you know that Tylenol can be deadly to a cat? Ibuprofen can cause fatal bleeding ulcers in dogs and kidney failure in cats. Did you know that some topical human medications can be fatal to dogs and cats if they chew up the tube?

Preventing access to any medications is the best way to ensure the safety of your children and pets. Keep all medications, human or veterinary, in a closed cabinet high up and out of reach. Even still, some dogs can reach higher ground when curious about a new smell or something to chew on. If so, child locks may be appropriate and/or you can keep the door shut to the room where medications are stored. Baby gates to block access to areas of the house, and crating when you aren't home should also help keep your dog safe.

Make sure all medications are clearly labeled. Keep each family member's medications separate to avoid accidentally giving a human medication to your pet or vice versa. Prescription pill vials from your veterinarian should be blue or green to distinguish them from the brown colored vials human pharmacies use.

Have the phone numbers for your primary veterinarian and the animal poison control hotline readily available in case despite your best efforts, your dog manages to get something other than a toy in his mouth. When you call, be ready to provide the name and strength of the medication, as well as how many tablets or capsules your dog may have ingested. Time may be of the essence, so call as soon as you discover the ingestion or exposure.

Medication safety is important for all members of the household. Thank you for protecting all of your loved ones.

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