



Can Cats Eat Dog Food?

The short answer is a NO!

As a short term, last resort solution – this is OK. A snack stolen from your dog's bowl will not cause any issues. However if eating dog food on a regular basis this can be detrimental to their health and wellbeing. You should feed a complete, species specific diet as this will be suitably balanced for your pet. It is often best to feed your pet a diet that has been designed to best support their life – stage as well i.e. kitten, adult or senior.



WHY IS DOG FOOD BAD LONG-TERM FOR MY CAT?

Cats and dogs have differences in their dietary needs. Cats are obligate carnivores which means their diet must consist mostly of meat protein, while dogs are omnivorous. By feeding your cat a diet designed for dogs, they will receive the incorrect balance of nutrients. Long term this can result in a wide range of health issues such as heart disease and gastrointestinal problems.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CAT AND DOG FOOD?

Cats have different nutritional needs to dogs, and their foods are often higher in protein, fat and some vitamins and minerals. Cat food tends to have a stronger smell and flavour too, with scent being a particularly important factor in cat food palatability.

Cats also have a different ability to detect flavour compared with dogs. Cats have only 500 taste buds whereas dogs have around 1700

HERE ARE SOME OF THE KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CAT AND DOG FOOD

PROTEINS

Certain amino acids (the building blocks of protein) such as taurine and arginine are essential requirements in a cat's diet. This is because a cat's body lacks the enzymes to make these amino acids. Taurine deficiency in cats can lead to serious health problems such as blindness or an enlarged heart. The same is not true for dogs as their bodies are able to synthesise taurine, which is why their dietary requirement for taurine is lower.

Cats also need higher dietary levels of protein than dogs because they receive a greater proportion of their energy from its metabolism.

VITAMINS

Cats and dogs need different levels of some vitamins. In particular, vitamin A. Vitamin A has important functions in maintaining the cat's eyes, skin and coat. Cats require more vitamin A than dogs. Therefore, cat food will often include higher quantities of vitamin A compared to dog food.

ARACHIDONIC ACID

This is an essential fatty acid which cannot be produced by cats and needs to be provided by their diet. Dog food may not be supplemented with arachidonic acid since their bodies can create their own.

SIZE

The physical size of kibble can differ from what your feline is used to, particularly if your dog is a large breed. With wet food – cat diets tend to be packaged in a smaller portion size, so as not to over feed them.

Having your two pets in different rooms at meal time can help reduce the incidents of your cat gaining access to your dog's food.

Xylitol Poisoning in Dogs

Sugar substitutes are big business. Less sugar can mean weight loss, improved health, diabetic control, and even reduced tooth decay. The quest for products that can sweeten and cook like sugar is ongoing. Xylitol is a common sugar substitute, especially when it comes to sugarless gum, toothpaste, and more recently certain brands of peanut butter.

If you are a dog, xylitol is potentially lethal.

Two Deadly Effects of Xylitol

Hypoglycaemia

In dogs, the pancreas confuses xylitol with real sugar and releases insulin to store the "sugar." Even worse, the canine pancreas releases 3-7 times the amount of insulin that it would release to address a similar amount of actual sugar. Blood sugar levels plummet resulting in weakness, disorientation, tremors, and potentially seizures.

It does not take many sticks of gum to poison a dog, especially a small dog (see below for toxic doses). Symptoms typically begin within 30 minutes and can last for more than 12 hours but, since xylitol can be absorbed into the body slowly, symptoms may not begin until 12 hours after the xylitol was eaten. Symptoms begin with vomiting and then progress to incoordination, collapse, and seizures.

Hepatic Necrosis

The other reaction associated with xylitol in dogs is destruction of liver tissue. How this happens remains unknown but the doses of xylitol required to produce this effect are much higher than the hypoglycaemic doses described above. Signs take longer to show up (typically 8-12 hours) and surprisingly not all dogs who experience hepatic necrosis will have had hypoglycaemia first. A lucky dog experiences only temporary illness but alternatively, a complete and acute liver failure can result in death. Internal haemorrhage and inability of blood to clot is commonly involved.

How Much Xylitol is Dangerous?

The hypoglycaemic dose of xylitol for dogs is considered to be approximately 0.075 - 0.1 grams per kilogram of body weight. Chewing gum pieces have surprisingly variable amounts of xylitol depending on their flavour. A small dog can easily be poisoned by a single stick of gum depending on the gum, how much the dog ate, and the size of the dog. It is important for you to bring the packaging for the xylitol product in question to the vet clinic so that the amount of xylitol consumed can be estimated.

Treatment

Ideally, the patient can be seen quickly (within 30 minutes) and can be made to vomit the gum or candy. Beyond this, a sugar IV drip is prudent for a good 24 hours. Liver enzyme and blood clotting tests are monitored for two to three days. Blood levels of potassium are ideally monitored as well. Elevated blood phosphorus levels often bode poorly, and patients that develop hepatic necrosis usually do not survive.

If you are worried your pet has been poisoned, it is recommended to ring the Clinic to ascertain if and what needs to be done. Have information ready such as the weight of your pet, approximate amount ingested and the details on the packaging about the substance.



Did you know.....

- ◆ Octopuses have three hearts.
- ◆ The flamingo can only eat when its head is upside-down.
- ◆ Giraffes have no vocal chords
- ◆ The heart of a shrimp is located in its head



- ◆ A housefly hums in the key of F.
- ◆ A rhinoceros' horn is made of hair.
- ◆ It takes a sloth two weeks to digest its food.

