

Human medications, narcotics and pets

Prescription and over the counter medications can both be extremely poisonous to animals. Most over the counter and prescription painkillers (ibuprofen, naproxen etc.) can cause severe intestinal ulcers and kidney damage when given to cats or dogs. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is particularly toxic to cats and causes liver damage as well as damage to red blood cells. Prescription anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medication can cause dangerous raises in body temperature, blood pressure, and heart rate or can cause severe lethargy, seizures, and coma. A beta-blocker blood pressure medication will cause a severe drop in blood pressure and slowed heart rate, often leading to kidney failure or death. If you suspect or know that your pet has gotten into medication, contact your veterinarian immediately and have the bottle ready to bring in with you so appropriate treatments can be given.

Human medications are not always safe for pets

Dr. Andrew Hodges

When we have a sore back, head ache or a cold it is common for us to just reach in to the medicine cabinet and get a medication to make us feel better. Sometimes when a pet is sick owners want to treat their pets and make them feel better as well. Some of our pets are much smaller than an adult person and an over dosage of a medication could be easily delivered. In addition, medications that work very well in humans can be toxic for our cats and dogs. Sometimes giving a medication can put off taking your pet to a veterinarian when it has a life threatening illness. Always phone and discuss any medications with your veterinarian prior to giving them to your pet.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is anti inflammatory medication that is very toxic to dogs and cats. In dogs the higher the dose the more likely for severe liver disease. Cats are very sensitive to acetaminophen it affects their ability to carry oxygen in their blood. Owners will notice that they become depressed and may salivate. Their gums and urine can become very dark brown. A common finding in cats is that their face and front legs will swell up a few hours after giving the medication. Never give Tylenol to a pet.

The most common cause of pet poisoning by a human medication is related to anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen and naproxen. Dogs and cats are very sensitive to these medications and small doses can have adverse effects on the digestive system and the kidneys. Some of these medications are not designed for our pets and some of the dosages we would give a human are much greater.

Many cold medications include pseudoephedrine which is a decongestant. It can cause dogs and cats to be hyper excited and can lead to seizures if given at high doses. Cats and dogs do not experience colds like we do and should never be given cold medication.

Many of the medications that we have been prescribed for depression, diabetes, sore muscles, heart failure, and high blood pressure are not designed for use in our pets. It is important that all medications be kept in a cat and dog proof area.

Some people may choose to use recreational drugs for their own intoxication. This author is against the use of these recreational drugs and they should never be tried on a pet. That is animal cruelty and illegal.

The quality of our pet's lives can be greatly improved with the prudent and directed use of medications as prescribed by a veterinarian. That being said improper use of a medication can decrease the quality and sadly abruptly end the life of a family pet. Please phone your veterinarian and consult with them prior to medicating your pet. Since the intended use of these medications is to make the pet comfortable it is better to be safe then sorry.

Marijuana and Pets

Written by Dr. Zoe Ross

With the increase of medical marijuana use and the upcoming legalization of marijuana in Canada, it is important to understand the potential for marijuana toxicity in pets. As we know from other medications, pets metabolize drugs differently than people and as a result can be more sensitive to them and this is the case with marijuana. Pets that accidentally ingest marijuana can show signs such as excessive salivation, lethargy, fast or slow heart rates, dilated pupils, decrease in body temperature, incoordination, vocalizing, sensitivity to sound or light, urinary incontinence and vomiting. If very high levels are ingested seizures, coma and even death may occur. Sometimes medical marijuana is combined with chocolate to make it easy for patients to take and this can make the pet even more sick as chocolate is toxic to dogs as well. If you suspect your pet may have consumed marijuana, contact your veterinarian and measures can be taken to treat the toxicity.

As a veterinarian, I often get asked about using medical marijuana or hemp to treat various diseases. I do think that there may be beneficial effects from these products for pets. Unfortunately though there hasn't been a lot of research in this area yet. Medications typically undergo rigorous trials before they are released for use. The most important thing that pharmaceutical companies and the FDA determine is the safety of drugs and what the toxic level of the drug is. I know I would be hesitant to use a product

if I didn't know the product was safe and that is important for pets as well. As a veterinarian it is important for us to help animals and not harm them. Once it is determined that a product is safe and the potential side effects have been identified, research is then done to determine if the product is beneficial. These studies can be expensive and time consuming and sometimes it can be years before the trial period for a product is complete and it is released on the market.

I think there can be a lot of benefits of nutraceuticals and alternative therapies but there is a sad shortage of research behind their use, safety and their benefits.

There are 3 classes of marijuana:

- 1) Recreational - this has high levels of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) in it which is the psychoactive compound and has the highest level of risk to pets for toxicity.
- 2) Medical – most of these products have quite low levels of THC in them and contain higher levels of CBD (cannabidiol) which are used for the medical treatments in people. While safer, these products still have high enough levels of THC in them to produce toxicity in pets.
- 3) Hemp – most hemp oil or hemp products are produced from legal hemp plants. There are a lot of proposed benefits to the use of hemp in pets and because they either have no or very low levels of THC in them they are considered safer however there is still a lack of studies to know what the toxic levels or the potential side effects are.

Veterinarians are not legally allowed to sell or prescribe medical marijuana in Canada at this time because there are no cannabidiol (CBD) products that are approved by Health Canada and the legalization of medical marijuana in Canada only applies to human use. As more research is done and products become approved, this may change. With more research, more information will become available on both the benefits and the safe dosages.

