

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.