

'Tis the Season to Keep Your Dog Safe!

These 15 tips will protect your dog from holiday hazards.

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5. Stow chocolate candy, baking chips and especially baker's chocolate out of reach. "Chocolate is the most common toxicity we treat during the holidays," Dr. Proulx said. Eating even small amounts causes vomiting and diarrhea. Large amounts can cause abnormal heart rhythms and nervous system malfunctions, even death.
6. Secure garbage in bins with dog-proof lids or behind locked doors. Dogs may chew up holiday throwaways such as meat scraps, bones, paper, foil or plastic flavored with food, and even gift wrapping and ribbon, which can absorb food flavors. Ingesting these items can result in vomiting, diarrhea or intestinal perforation or obstruction.
7. Read labels on products such as tree water preservatives and artificial snow, and buy only those labeled non-toxic.
8. Put away toys after children open them. Small plastic and rubber balls are common causes of choking and in testinal blockage in dogs. Ingested plastic or cloth toys must often be removed surgically.
9. Consider a smaller living or cut tree that can be positioned on a tabletop, making it harder for your dog to reach decorations or knock over the tree. Secure larger trees to a wall to prevent tipping, and use a screen around the base to block access to electrical cords and gifts.
10. Avoid using edible decorations such as popcorn or gumdrop garlands, candy canes. They can cause stomach upset.
11. Fastenall decorations securely and arrange breakable ornaments toward the top of the tree. Dogs may chew them and suffer cuts in the mouth. Tinsel and angel hair can cause digestive tract obstructions. "Bubbling" lights, filled with methlene chloride, can be mildly toxic.
12. Return paper, ribbons and yarn to their storage places after gift wrapping. Bored, anxious or merely curious dogs may choke on them.
13. Place holiday plants out of reach. Poinsettia can cause mild symptoms of drooling, oral pain or vomiting. Mistletoe can cause vomiting, diarrhea, labored breathing, shock and even death from cardiovascular collapse. Vacuum often. Eating the needles of both real and artificial trees can cause intestinal blockage.
14. Display candles on high shelves, and use fireplace screens to avoid singed whickers and painful burns.
15. Tuck cords out of reach. Bored dogs and teething pups often get electrocuted when they chew them.