

## Eating Paper Is Bad for Dog's Health

**Keep paper out your dog's reach to stop this dangerous habit.**

*By Jon Geller, DVM*

Q. We have a 3-year-old Golden Retriever mix who started eating toilet paper, napkins and paper towels about six months ago. He's absolutely obsessed with eating them. We have scolded him, sprayed paper with the bitter products, and tried tough love. While I was in another room for five minutes today, he got on the table and ate about 100 napkins from the napkin holder. Why is he so hooked on paper? Is it just obsessive behavior? What can we do to stop him? Is this excessive paper eating harmful to him?

A. Unless you can cure your dog of his paper-eating ways, he may be headed toward intestinal surgery at a great financial expense to you. As much as I like the idea of you keeping the economy going and partly subsidizing the veterinary profession, you need to address this issue more directly.

Of special concern is bathroom trash: sanitary napkins and paper towels are notorious for getting lodged in dogs' intestines, causing a blockage that requires surgery to correct. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the 100 napkins he ate will have successfully passed through his digestive tract.

From a practical standpoint, deny your dog access to any paper products. This will be inconvenient for you since all napkins and toilet paper will have to be kept behind doors or up higher than he can reach. (I assume he goes up on counters and tables to get his goods.) Unless you are willing to monitor your dog 100 percent of the time, this is your only choice. You may need to keep him kenneled or confined to certain areas of the house at times to keep paper products away from him.

Keep in mind, dogs like attention, even if it's not all positive. You said you are giving your dog tough love; some dogs cannot sort out tough love from other kinds of love, any more than they cannot help but love their owners no matter what they do to them. If your dog does happen to get hold of some paper product, very casually take it away from him, reprimand him sternly if you catch him in the act, and don't indulge him with any excessive attention.

Once you have denied him access for several months, and the issue has gone away, you can very gradually try reintroducing paper products back into the real world. Hopefully, by then, he will have other priorities.