

People Food: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Six human foods that are a danger to dogs.

Brought to you by The Original Dog Bible

Not everyone agrees on whether or not dogs should ever eat the food we eat. Because high-quality dog foods provide a dog with all the nutrients he needs in the correct proportions, many vets and dog experts advise never straying from that highly researched formula. Too many additional extras can throw off that perfect ratio of nutrients.

On the other hand, some people, particularly holistic veterinarians and other alternative health care experts, believe that because many of the original nutrients and enzymes in dog food are destroyed during processing, a strict diet of processed kibble isn't sufficient and is at best unnatural for dogs. They feel that the addition of healthful people food to a dog's diet won't hurt and may even provide the dog with fresher, more available nutrients than those in processed dog food. These people choose to feed their dogs a homemade diet of unprocessed fresh foods either as a supplement to a commercial food or as a complete diet.

An occasional healthy snack for your dog is probably fine in moderation, but certain foods humans eat are dangerous for dogs. Others, such as potato chips and ice cream, may not be toxic, but they can cause gastrointestinal upset, contribute to obesity, and provide no benefits. Avoid the following foods when giving your dog treats or a homemade diet:

Chocolate: Chocolate contains two substances harmful to dogs: theobromine and caffeine. Both of these substances occur in only a small amount in milk chocolate but are much more concentrated in bakers chocolate. The darker and less sweet the chocolate, the more dangerous it is for dogs. A little milk chocolate may result in diarrhea and offers no nutritional benefit. A lot of dark chocolate affects the nervous system and could cause hyperexcitability, restlessness, frequent urination, tremors, and vomiting. Severe cases can result in seizures and cardiac arrest, or even death.

Onions and garlic: In large quantities, onions and garlic can cause hemolytic anemia. Ingesting a small amount of garlic is harmless and even beneficial; it's an ingredient used in many dog treats. Onions are more potent. While your dog may tolerate eating bits of meat cooked in onion, don't actually feed your dog the cooked onion pieces or onion-infused broth.

Raisins and grapes: According to the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, grapes and raisins have caused numerous cases of poisoning when ingested by dogs for as yet unknown reasons. Dogs typically experience lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, and eventually renal failure. While many dogs eat the occasional grape as a treat without a problem, keep dogs away from grape vines or from eating an entire bunch of grapes. Don't ever feed raisins to your dog; even small servings of raisins have been linked to toxic reactions, and raisins aren't good for pet dental health, either.

Alcohol: Dogs absorb alcohol quickly and are prone to toxic reactions such as inebriation, seizures, arrhythmias of the heart, low body temperature, kidney damage, and even coma or death. Never give any form of alcohol to your dog.

- More Nutrition Tips -

Reprinted from The Original Dog Bible © 2005. Permission granted by BowTie Press.