

National Poison Prevention Week

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This month, we celebrate National Poison Prevention Week during March 15-21, 2015. This week was created over 50 years ago to help make homes safer and to help save lives. While originally designed to help educate humans about the dangerous poisons within their house, this poison prevention week has since been modified to include our canine and feline patients. Currently, ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) receives almost 150,000 calls a year on animal-related calls about toxicities.

So, how do we prevent accident poisonings of our canine and feline patients? Below, 10 tips to share with your pet owners to help minimize poisoning dangers.

CRATE TRAIN YOUR DOG

Appropriate crate training is so important as a way of keeping dogs safe. By teaching pet owners that the crate is not punishment but rather a safe den environment, we can help keep dogs safe while owners are away at work. This would dramatically minimize the risk of "counter surfing" and accidental poisoning of common household toxicants around the house.

HANG UP YOUR PURSE, BRIEFCASE OR BACKPACK

There are so many toxicants in the purse, briefcase or backpack including prescription medications, coins, cell phone batteries, NSAIDs, xylitol gum, snack-size raisin boxes, and more! By teaching pet owners to take the time to hang these items up out of reach, we can prevent snooping noses from accidentally ingesting toxicants.

STORE HUMAN MEDICATIONS AWAY FROM VETERINARY MEDICATIONS

I've had so many pet owners accidentally give their dog their own human medication (e.g., beta blockers, calcium channel blockers or other anti-hypertensive medications) by accident instead of their dog's thyroid medication. By teaching pet owners to store their human

medications in one cabinet of the kitchen and putting their pet medications in a totally different area (e.g., another kitchen drawer), we can prevent this common iatrogenic toxicosis.

STORE WEEKLY PILL HOLDERS IN AN ELEVATED, SECURED CABINET

Nothing is more frustrating than when a dog gets into "polypharmacy medications": a whole array of different pills, milligram strengths, vitamins, etc. This often occurs when pet owners put their week's medications in one plastic weekly pill holder. Keep in mind that these plastic pill holders sound like plastic rattle chew toys. Educate your pet owners to keep these elevated in a secured cabinet and off the countertop.

STOP STORING PILLS IN PLASTIC ZIP BAGS

People often throw their week's medications in a temporary plastic zip bag before going out of town, only to casually toss this easy-to-chew plastic bag into their suitcase. The unique smells of the pills can trigger a dog or cat to accidentally ingest these, resulting in toxicosis.

KEEP CHEWABLE MEDICATIONS OUT OF REACH

Before prescribing chewable medications (e.g., such as NSAIDs, pibobendan, etc.), please make sure to educate your pet owner on how palatable these products can be – and how toxic if ingested in large amounts!

SUPERVISE PETS WHEN OUTSIDE

Teaching pet owners to keep their dogs and cats supervised outside is an easy way of keeping their pet safe. This prevents accidental ingestion of rodenticides, plant or grass fertilizers, compost, and poisonous plants.

GARAGE PROOFING

So many toxicants exist in the garage including hydrocarbons (e.g., gasoline,

kerosene, motor oil), ethylene glycol, fertilizers, bone meal, rodenticides, and more. By teaching pet owners to secure these items on elevated shelves out of reach – or better yet – keep the pets completely out of the garage, we can save lives here!

HAVE YOUR PET OWNERS ADD YOUR CLINIC, THE EMERGENCY CLINIC, AND ASPCA APCC'S PHONE NUMBER INTO SPEED DIAL ON THE PHONE

Encourage your pet owners to add the phone numbers to your veterinary clinic, the emergency clinic, and ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (888-426-4435) into their cell phone, so they have ready access 24/7 in case of emergency.

DOWNLOAD THE FREE ASPCA APCC APP

Make sure you and your staff – along with your pet owners – download ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center's free app. More information here: <http://drjustinelee.com/new-free-pet-poisoning-app-pet-owners-veterinary-professionals-dr-justine-lee/>

When in doubt, pet poisonings can be prevented with appropriate pet owner education. Use these tips to encourage your pet owners to save their pets from a potentially life-threatening, expensive poisoning during National Poison Prevention Week.



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