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## Holiday safety tips for your cats

The holiday season is here, and many owners like to share the festivities with their cats. Let them join in,



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but beware; educated owners know that many dangers exist concerning holiday foods and their cats.

Cats do not yearn for junk

food and sweets the same way that we do. They may smell things that are enticing, and seem to be interested in what we are eating, but they should not be fed anything other than small amounts of meat from the table.

During the holidays avoid giving milk, eggnog, cheese and cream to your cat. Felines like milk and other dairy products, but in reality, most are fairly lactose intolerant. Cats lack an enzyme in their digestive tracts that allows for the proper digestion and me-

tabolism of cow's milk.

Chocolate should never be fed to cats. Chocolate contains a chemical that cats cannot properly digest, and builds like a toxin in their systems. The signs associated with chocolate toxicity are vomiting, lethargy, muscle tremors and possibly seizures or coma.

Alcoholic beverages should never be given to cats. Their small bodies are not equipped to adequately detoxify alcohol. They can develop alcohol poisoning, which is potentially fatal. Cats should also be kept away from directly inhaling cigarette or cigar smoke.

Turkey carcasses and bones sitting out or in the garbage may attract your cat. Bones can become lodged in a cat's mouth or obstruct the intestinal tract and cause severe problems. If bones make it down into the stomach and intestines, it could be days before a cat would show any signs of illness. Signs would be vomiting, listlessness, lack of appetite and abdominal pain.

Some poultry and hams are tied up with string or

netting. These can cause obstructions of the cat's intestines if eaten. Strings are extremely dangerous because they cause bunching of the intestines.

Historically poinsettias have been considered toxic plants, but in reality they may only cause mild stomach irritation and vomiting when eaten. Mistletoe, on the other hand, should never be in reach of a cat.

Decorations such as tinsel, ribbons and yarn are hazards if your cat eats them. These items cause intestinal obstructions.

The stealth nature of cats makes it difficult to know what the animal has gotten in to.

What should you do if you suspect that your cat has eaten something that it should not have? You should monitor the pet for any vomiting, diarrhea, straining or lack of appetite. If these signs are present, you should consult with your veterinarian.

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