Xylitol Toxicity in Dogs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Toxin
Xylitol

Source
Artificial sweetener in gums, breath mints, candy, and other human food sources.

General Information
Many dogs like sweet foods, and can be attracted to human foods containing xylitol. Xylitol is toxic in several ways in dogs. It can cause hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and it can be very toxic to the liver of dogs, causing acute liver failure. The liver failure can in turn cause bleeding episodes.

Toxic Dose
One or two pieces of xylitol-sweetened gum could cause hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) in a 20 lb. dog. As little as 5 pieces of gum could cause acute liver failure in a 10 lb dog.

Signs
Signs of hypoglycemia may include weakness, lack of energy, incoordination, and sometimes seizures. The hypoglycemia may not occur until 12-18 hours after ingestion. Signs of liver failure from xylitol toxicity may include vomiting, depression, weakness, lack of appetite, jaundice (yellowing of the gums and inner eyelids), blood in the feces, and other bleeding.

Immediate Action
Induce vomiting and seek veterinary attention.

Veterinary Care
General treatment: The induction of vomiting may be continued, and gastric lavage is performed. Activated charcoal is not effective for xylitol toxicity.

Supportive treatment: Intravenous fluids will be started and blood glucose levels will be monitored for several days and tests for liver disease will be performed. In cases of vomiting, medications to control the vomiting may be given. In liver failure, antibiotics and medications to support the liver may also be given.

Specific treatment: Unavailable.

Prognosis
Recovery from hypoglycemia is likely if treated. The prognosis for dogs with liver failure is guarded.

If you think your pet has been poisoned...
Contact your veterinarian or one of the Animal Poison Hotlines (listed below) if you think your pet may have accidentally received or been given an overdose of the medication.

**ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center - 24-hour service available throughout North America.**
1-888-4ANI-HELP (1-888-426-4435), $65.00 per case, billed to caller’s credit card.
Follow-up calls can be made for an additional charge by dialing 888-299-2473.
There is no charge to the call if involves a problem covered by the Animal Product Safety Service.

**Pet Poison Helpline - 24-hour service available throughout North America for pet owners and veterinary professionals who require assistance with treating a potentially poisoned pet.**
1-800-213-6680 ($59.00 per incident). Staffed 24 hours a day.

Updated 6/20/17