

Sugar-free gum can be deadly for dogs

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(HealthDay)—Here's an alert for all dog lovers: Sugarless chewing gum isn't good for your pooch. In fact, it could be deadly.

Xylitol, the substance that gives sugar-free gum its sweetness, is dangerous to dogs, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warns. The FDA has received multiple reports in recent years of dogs being poisoned by xylitol, which is used in various consumer products, such as sugar-free candy, breath mints, baked goods, chewable vitamins, mouthwash and toothpaste.

"If you're concerned about your dog eating a food or product with xylitol in it, check the label of ingredients," Martine Hartogenesis, an FDA veterinarian, said in a statement from the agency. "If it does, indeed, say that it contains xylitol, make sure your pet can't get to it."

Xylitol isn't dangerous to people, but dogs process it differently than humans. They absorb it quickly, and it can spike their insulin levels, causing dangerously low [blood sugar](#). This can be life-threatening if it's not treated, Hartogenesis said.

Take your dog to the vet or emergency animal hospital immediately if you suspect xylitol poisoning, she said. A dog may vomit and suffer from similar symptoms to those of an adult with [low blood sugar](#) such as lethargy, weakness, lack of coordination, staggering and seizures. Monitoring could be necessary because symptoms may not appear for as long as 24 hours.

To avoid xylitol exposure, keep human toothpaste, sugar-free gum and any other xylitol-containing product away from your dog. Don't use human toothpaste on [dogs](#), the FDA says.

Also, be aware that nut butters can include xylitol. If you give your dog nut butter as a treat or as a way to get your dog to take pills, check the label first to make sure it doesn't contain xylitol.

And what about cats? According to the FDA, they aren't fans of sweets,

so [xylitol](#) doesn't seem to be a major threat for them.

More information: For more about xylitol and similar sweeteners, visit the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#).

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