

Dogs have died after licking a common chemotherapy cream, FDA warns

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Your dog may like to lick your hand or face, but if you're using a

chemotherapy cream that treats certain skin conditions, you should not allow it, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration advises.

The medication [fluorouracil](#) is fatal to dogs when ingested. People who keep the cream on a nightstand or counter should put it out of reach of their dogs, who may ingest it if they chew the container, the FDA advised.

The agency has received reports involving dogs that were exposed to the cream; all the dogs have died.

Although the FDA has not yet received any reports of [fluorouracil](#) poisoning in cats or other pets, it recommends that this drug be kept away from all pets.

The cream is used to treat some types of skin cancers and a condition called [actinic keratosis](#), which can lead to [skin cancer](#). It may also be used to treat [warts](#) in children. Occasionally it is used to treat certain cancers in horses.

It can be dispersed as an injection, or as a topical cream or a topical solution that's applied on the skin. Brand names include Efudex, Carac, Tolak and Fluoroplex.

Pets who ingest fluorouracil may show signs of poisoning within 30 minutes. These signs can include vomiting, shaking, seizures, difficulty breathing and diarrhea.

Affected dogs can die in as little as six to 12 hours.

If you suspect your pet has consumed fluorouracil, immediately get [veterinary care](#) and bring the container of cream with you. Also contact your vet or an emergency vet hospital immediately even if your pet just

licks the area where you applied fluorouracil, and definitely call if your pet chews the container and consumes some of the fluorouracil.

The FDA has asked makers of fluorouracil topical products to add new wording to the labels warning about the danger to pets. It would say, "May be fatal if your pet licks or ingests. Avoid allowing pets to contact this tube or your skin where fluorouracil has been applied. Store and dispose out of reach of pets."

In addition to keeping containers out of reach or in a closed cabinet and not allowing your pet to lick you, the FDA also [recommends](#) pet owners dispose of empty containers in areas that aren't accessible to their pets.

Talk to your [health care provider](#) about whether you should cover the treated area of your skin with clothing or gauze to prevent your pet from licking your skin.

Report any pet exposure with fluorouracil or other human or animal drugs to the [FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine](#).

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more on [fluorouracil](#).

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