

TOP 10 SAFETY TIPS FOR PET PARENTS

The ASPCA would like to point out these common-sense cautions that'll help keep your pets safe and stress-free this time of year. If you do suspect your pet has ingested a potentially dangerous substance, please call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435.

1. No tricks, no treats: That bowlful of candy is for trick-or-treaters, not for Scruffy and Fluffy.

Chocolate in all forms—especially dark or baking chocolate—can be very dangerous for dogs and cats. Symptoms of significant chocolate ingestion may include vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, increased thirst, urination and heart rate—and even seizures.

Candies containing the artificial sweetener xylitol can be poisonous to dogs. Even small amounts of xylitol sweetener can cause a sudden drop in blood sugar, which leads to depression, lack of coordination and seizures. In cases of significantly low blood sugar, liver failure has been known to occur.

Ingesting tin foil and cellophane candy wrappers can pose a choking hazard or cause intestinal blockage.

2. Popular Halloween plants such as pumpkins and decorative corn are considered to be relatively nontoxic, yet they can produce gastrointestinal upset should pets ingest them. Intestinal blockage could even occur if large pieces are swallowed.
3. Keep wires and cords from electric lights and other decorations out of reach of your pets. If chewed, your pet could experience damage to his mouth from shards of glass or plastic, or receive a possibly life-threatening electrical shock.
4. A carved pumpkin certainly is festive, but do exercise extreme caution if you choose to add a candle. Pets can easily knock a lit pumpkin over and cause a fire. Curious kittens especially run the risk of getting burned or singed by candle flames.
5. Dress-up can be a big mess-up for some pets. Please don't put your dog or cat in a costume UNLESS you know he or she loves it (yup, a few pets are real hams!). For pets who prefer their "birthday suits," however, wearing a costume can cause undue stress.
6. If you do dress up your pet, make sure the costume isn't annoying or unsafe. It should not constrict the animal's movement or hearing, or impede his ability to breathe, bark or meow. Also try on costumes before the big night. If your pet seems distressed, allergic or shows abnormal behavior, consider letting him go au naturel or donning a festive bandana.
7. Take a closer look at your pet's costume and make sure it does not have small, dangling or easily chewed-off pieces that he could choke on. Also, ill-fitting outfits can get twisted on external objects or your pet, leading to injury.
8. All but the most social dogs and cats should be kept in a separate room away from the front door during peak trick-or-treat visiting hours. Too many strangers can be scary and stressful for pets.
9. When opening the door for trick-or-treaters, take care that your cat or dog doesn't dart outside.
10. IDs, please! Always make sure your dog or cat has proper identification. If for any reason your pet escapes and become lost, a collar and tags and/or a microchip can increase the chances that he or she will be returned to you