

Sugar-free snacks can be toxic for pets

On a low carb diet? Planning on sharing some of those low calorie dessert treats with your canine friends? STOP! That sugar-free snack you think is good for you and your dog could actually send you to the veterinarian!

For many of us, sharing food with our pets is a daily routine that we both enjoy and cherish, despite the numerous pleas from veterinarians to limit "people food". We know that giving "Fluffy" table scraps encourages more begging, can make her obese, and may make her a finicky eater. However, new research shows that certain "sugar free" treats can actually cause liver failure in your dog, and perhaps even kill him or her.

For many Americans and Europeans, the sugar substitute, Xylitol, has been an amazing development in the fight against tooth decay and in helping diabetics gain better control over their disease. Most Xylitol is developed from processing corn cobs, wood chips (especially birch), or

other plant material. Although it tastes just as sweet as sucrose, it has about 40 percent less food energy, making it ideal for "low carb" dieters and for diabetics. Xylitol is found in gums and tooth-pastes, although many other food

items, such as breads and desserts, may also contain this sugar substitute.

For years, veterinarians have suspected that Xylitol could make dogs sick, but a recent article in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA) has actually documented the illness in eight dogs. Five of the eight dogs died or were euthanized due to complications stemming from Xylitol ingestion. Additionally, the ASPCA Poison Control Center has documented an increase in the number of Xylitol-related pet exposures. It



pet tales

dr. janice huntingford, DVM

appears that dogs who ingest a large amount of the sugar substitute develop a profound hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar levels, within 30 minutes of consumption. This decrease in blood sugar is due to a rapid increase in the production of insulin in the dog's body. But small amounts of Xylitol do not appear to be any safer.

The JAVMA report states that a 22-pound dog who consumes just 1 gram of Xylitol can generate the rapid insulin production and the associated drop in blood sugar levels. As a comparison, the popular gum Trident contains almost 0.20 grams of Xylitol in each stick. Other foods, such as raspberries and mushrooms, can contain up to 1 gram of Xylitol in a single cup of that food. The JAVMA report continues, stating that it appears the smaller doses can indeed cause liver failure

in dogs.

Dogs who consume Xylitol will most often appear to be weak and uncoordinated, due to the sudden decrease in blood sugar levels. The pet may also start to seizure as potassium levels in the blood start to drop as well. Due to the severity and quick mechanism of action, anyone who suspects that their pet may have ingested a Xylitol containing product should seek veterinary advice immediately.

Veterinarians warn that there is nothing that can be done to remedy the situation at home, so the best course of action is to get to your family veterinarian as soon as possible.

Xylitol can also be found in children's chewable multi-vitamins, certain cough medications, and even mouthwashes as well as sugar free gum and candies. Bonding with your pet doesn't always have to be about sharing treats. Many of the foods that we would consider to be harmless, such as chocolate or even raisins, can actually cause severe illness in our pets. Now, the sugar substitute Xylitol has been added to that list.

Visit www.MyVNN.com to see a video describing the symptoms of Xylitol toxicity and how you can help keep your dog safe.

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Essex OPP canine handler Dan Harness gives his dog Lexi a pat on the head while posing for photographers in Emeryville last week. Harness and Lexi were introduced to the media as the newest members of the Essex OPP.

Essex OPP gets four-legged addition

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

EMERYVILLE – When Essex OPP Const. Dan Harness finishes a day of work, he takes his partner home with him.

Lexi, a two-year-old German shepherd completed her training last month and will now assist Harness and the OPP with criminal investigations.

When she isn't tracking scents at a crime scene, Lexi will be staying in a kennel in Harness's backyard.

"This dog is with me 24-7," said Harness, a six-year OPP veteran who is excited about his new position. "This is what I wanted to do coming into the job."

Lexi entered the OPP Academy Canine Training

Centre in Gravenhurst in August, where she spent 16 weeks being taught obedience and how to track human scents.

"The dog will assist with many investigations," Harness said. "Whenever someone flees from police and the officers are unable to locate them at the time, she will assist with tracking the scent."

Harness says the dog is especially protective of her new handler.

"She's fresh out of training so she's fairly still in the aggressive mode," he said. "But she'll become more sociable as she gets to be around more people."

Lexi will be in service with the Essex OPP for seven years.

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