

Ask A Vet: Ibuprofen Toxic to Pets

Sunday, October 30, 2016

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

The last couple of days, our indoor only cat has been acting a little down. Her appetite has diminished some and she feels very, very warm. I was considering giving her half of a tablet of ibuprofen, in case she is painful or running a fever. Is there a recommended dosage for cats/dogs?

-Poppin' Pills in Plymouth

Dear Plymouth,

It is great that you are wanting to help your feline friend feel fresh again, however, human medications should NEVER be given to dogs or cats without first consulting your veterinarian. Additionally, ibuprofen is especially dangerous for cats and dogs. Ibuprofen is the most popular over the counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) in the US, and as such, is the most commonly implicated NSAID toxicity in cats, dogs, and ferrets.

Many of our pet species (like dogs, cats, and ferrets) are very sensitive to ibuprofen and rapidly absorb the drug, meaning that the things ibuprofen is meant to do in people can be amplified to harmful levels in pets. This can cause things like damage to the kidneys and protective layers of the stomach. A study has even shown that one 200mg ibuprofen tablet can be toxic to cats and small dogs.

If you suspect that your pet may have accidentally ingested ibuprofen, it is advised that you contact your veterinarian immediately for further instruction. At that time several steps may be taken. If the ingestion occurred within a few hours, your veterinarian may induce vomiting to prevent the drug from being absorbed by the intestines. If induction of vomiting is unsuccessful, or if it's been several hours since ingestion, your veterinarian may have you watch for signs of toxicity. In dogs and cats, these signs include gastrointestinal signs (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, blood in the vomit or diarrhea, excess salivation, pain in the stomach), kidney injury (depression, vomiting, increased urination and thirst, or no urination), and neurologic signs (respiratory depression, seizures, unresponsiveness, or coma).

If you notice any of these signs, or if you are unsure, it is always best to contact your primary care veterinarian. If these signs are noticed, and you think your pet has ingested ibuprofen, your veterinarian will likely begin diagnostics and supportive care. This will include bloodwork to assess kidneys and blood loss, followed by fluids, stomach protectants, and activated charcoal. In severe cases, blood transfusions, anti-seizure medications, and lipid emulsion therapy may be indicated. In most cases, as long as the pet is treated swiftly, prognosis is good and animals make a full recovery. Sometimes, especially when large doses are left untreated, prognosis for recovery can be very poor. If you ever are concerned about your animal, it is always recommended to first contact your veterinarian, as very serious problems can sometimes appear to be insignificant without proper examinations and diagnostics.

Thank you for being a faithful reader, and we are always happy to help you and your pet!

-Dr. Kyle DeYoung