

# Ask A Vet: Halloween Doggie Tips

*Sunday, October 27, 2013*

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

With Halloween right around the corner, is there any special consideration that we need to have for our dogs? We know that chocolate is bad, but is there anything else?

-Woof or Treat

Dear Woof,

That is a wonderful question, particularly leading into this time of year with all of the holidays. Chocolate is something that, I think, everyone is well aware of, but there are other risks during Halloween. Candy and other sweet foods – especially those containing poisonous xylitol (artificial sweetener in sugarless candy/gum) - can also be poisonous to pets. Large ingestions of sugary, high-fat candy and sweets can lead to pancreatitis in pets. Potentially fatal, pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas and is very painful. Pet owners should be aware that clinical signs of pancreatitis may not present for several days after ingestion. Signs include a decreased appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, abdominal pain, and potentially, kidney or organ damage.

If your dogs get into the candy bowl, they can eat the wrappers too. Ingestion of foil and plastic wrappers can cause direct stomach and intestinal irritation, or lead to a life-threatening bowel obstruction, which may require surgery. Things to watch for include: vomiting (particularly after eating or drinking), diarrhea, straining to defecate, and abdominal pain. Your veterinarian may perform blood work or take radiographs to aid in diagnosing the problem(s). A perennial favorite is glow-sticks. While not usually life-threatening, the contents can cause mouth pain and irritation, as well as excessive drooling and foaming. If your pet chews on glow jewelry, offer a tasty snack to help remove the product from the mouth. Bathing the chemical off the fur is important too, as self-grooming can contribute to further poisoning.

Dressing up your pet can be a fun part of the holidays for photos, trick-or-treating, etc. The main rules for pet costumes are the same as for children's costumes. Do not allow the costume to impair your pet's vision, movement, or ability to breathe. Any small, potentially detachable pieces should be avoided or removed to reduce choking or obstruction hazards. Metallic pieces, particularly those containing zinc should be avoided.

Throughout the holiday season, if you are concerned that your pet has consumed something potentially

dangerous, call your veterinarian for guidance. The earlier problems are identified, typically the better chance we doctors have of helping. Additionally, pet owners can contact the Pet Poison Helpline at 800-213-6680 or [www.petpoisonhelpline.com](http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com), to get this and more information or if you cannot reach your regular veterinarian. Pet Poison Helpline's fee of \$39 per incident includes follow-up consultation for the duration of the poison case.

-Dr. Jason Heitzman