

Apple: This Crunchy Fruit Is an Antioxidant Superstar

Found in most grocery stores all year round, this beloved fruit is known for its crunchy texture, making it a wonderful treat to share with pets. It offers numerous phytochemicals that may help ward off illnesses and even contains a compound that may help freshen your pet's breath.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker



STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Apples can be given to your pets as a crunchy snack or treat, or they can be added to your pet's nutritionally adequate, species-appropriate diet
- Apples offer a variety of phytochemicals, such as catechin, quercetin, phloridzin and chlorogenic acid. Studies have found that the strong antioxidant activities of apples may help minimize the risk of cancer and reduce lipid oxidation
- The quercetin in apples has natural antihistamine properties, meaning it can help minimize allergy symptoms like itching, inflammation and irritation in your pets. It's even called "nature's Benadryl"
- Conventionally grown apples are typically treated with pesticides to protect them from insects and fungi, so make sure you buy only organic apples for yourself and your pet

It's common knowledge that apples are extremely beneficial for humans. They're found almost everywhere — it's nearly impossible to walk into a grocery store and not see a single apple in the fruits and vegetables section. With an annual consumption of 84.14 million tons worldwide, apples are one of the most popular and widely available fruits today.¹

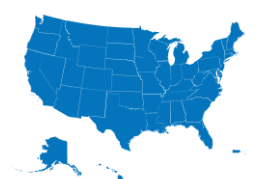
But as pet parents, you might be wondering: Are apples a safe food you can share with your furry friends? The answer is yes — fresh, organic (or spray-free) apples can be given to your pets as a crunchy snack or treat, or they can be added to your pet's nutritionally adequate, species-appropriate diet. Cats are carnivores and probably won't eat apples, but if they show an interest it's fine to share a bite of apple with them too.

Just remember that treats, including all fresh foods you share, should constitute less than 10% of your pet's daily caloric intake. Here are some great reasons why you should share apples with your pets.

Where Do Apples Grow?



Apples are ubiquitous fruits that grow all over the world. Today, China is the highest producer — accounting for 50% of global production — followed by the U.S. Other countries like Turkey, Poland and Italy also produce this fruit.²



Apples Are Rich in Phytochemicals

Apples are an antioxidant superstar, and they offer a variety of phytochemicals, such as catechins, quercetin, phloridzin and chlorogenic acid. Studies have found that the strong antioxidant activities of apples may help minimize the risk of cancer and reduce lipid oxidation.³

Chlorogenic acid, which is more abundant in the flesh of the apple,⁴ has been found to have "antidiabetic, anticarcinogenic, anti-inflammatory and antiobesity" properties. According to a 2017 study published in the European Journal of Nutrition, the benefits of chlorogenic acid "may provide a non-pharmacological and non-invasive approach for treatment or prevention of some chronic diseases."⁵

Catechins, which are also abundant in foods like green tea and legumes, have anti-inflammatory properties.⁶ In human health, they've been linked to reducing the risk of chronic diseases like inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).⁷ The antioxidant phloridzin, which is a glucoside of phloretin, has similar gut health benefits as well — a 2019 study found that apples' potential in "ameliorating intestinal inflammation symptoms" may be linked to this antioxidant.⁸



Did You Know?

Apples may help freshen your pup's breath. This fruit contains malic acid,⁹ which helps keep your dog's teeth clean and their breath fresh.¹⁰



Quercetin Offers Antioxidant and Antiallergenic Benefits

One of the standout antioxidants in apples is quercetin, which has been associated with a reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease in human studies.¹¹ Quercetin also has natural antihistamine properties, meaning it may help minimize allergy symptoms like itching, inflammation and irritation in your pets. It's even called "nature's Benadryl."¹²

According to Rodney Habib, quercetin "inhibits the production of specific inflammatory molecules," which means it may also be helpful in alleviating asthma and respiratory issues.¹³ Other potential benefits include minimizing the risk of cancer (thanks to apples' pectin content¹⁴), supporting bone health¹⁵ and helping maintain a healthy weight.¹⁶



Here's Why You Shouldn't Discard Apple Peels

Remember that quercetin is a major component of apple peels,¹⁷ so if you're after this flavonoid in apples, don't remove the peels before sharing the fruit with your pet. Instead, make sure you feed them organic apples so they're not exposed to pesticide residues if you keep the skin on.



Apples Are an Excellent Source of Fiber

Two tablespoons of apples can give your pets 0.37 grams of fiber, which can have immune-boosting benefits.¹⁸ One study found that the soluble fiber found in foods like apples and nuts may not only strengthen the immune system but also helps reduce inflammation that may lead to obesity-related illnesses.¹⁹

A separate study also noted that dietary fiber helped reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer.²⁰ Pectin, the main soluble fiber found in apples, is said to help prevent constipation and may help optimize cholesterol levels. According to the Harvard School of Public Health:

"Pectin is also fermented by beneficial bacteria in the colon, which produces short chain fatty acids that may play a role in the prevention of chronic diseases, including certain cancers and bowel disorders."²¹

Is There a Risk When Feeding Apples to Your Pet?



"When feeding apples to your pets, make sure you cut them into small pieces to minimize the risk of choking."

One concern that pet parents have about apples is the myth that it can lead to cyanide poisoning. This is because apple seeds contain amygdalin, which is part of the plant's defense system. While this compound is harmless if the seeds remain intact, it can degrade into cyanide when the seeds are chewed or damaged. Cyanide is a poison that may cause serious health repercussions and may even result in death when consumed in large amounts.²²

However, the cyanide in apple seeds is found in miniscule quantities, so if your pet only consumes a few seeds, there's nothing to worry about. According to Dogs Naturally Magazine:²³

"It would take at least 0.2 mg of cyanide for every pound of bodyweight to cause acute poisoning. That translates to 10g for a 50-pound dog. An entire gram of chewed apple seeds would only deliver up to 0.24 mg of cyanide. There are about 20 apple seeds in one gram."

The safest thing to do is to remove the core, seeds and stem from the apple before giving it to your pets. Feed them the flesh only, and make sure you wash the fruit thoroughly before serving it to your furry buddies.

Reminder: Choose Only Organic Apples

As much as possible, you should keep the apple peel on, because it contains a good amount of flavonoids and fiber. This is why it's important you buy only organic apples for yourself and your pet. Fresh, organic or unsprayed apples are often available at your local farmers market.

Keep in mind that conventionally grown apples are typically treated with pesticides to protect them from insects and fungi. In fact, apples ranked seventh in the Environmental Working Group's 2023 Dirty Dozen list.²⁴ By choosing organic apples, you can avoid overloading your pet's body with unwanted pesticides and chemicals that may do them harm.

Sources and References

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