

The Holistic Red Flag Most Pet Owners Don't Yet Know About

Holistic health offers so many benefits for both you and your pet. But this one is a potential bombshell for your pet, and some pets consider them irresistible. And speaking of hazards, here are 5 others that pose grave dangers to your pet.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If you have salt lamps around your home and you also have a cat, it's a good idea to make absolutely sure your kitty can't get to the lamp in the event she decides to lick the salt
- Too much salt is toxic to pets, and can even cause death
- Other surprising cat toxins include topical human pain medications, flea/tick spot-on products, glow sticks, laundry detergent pods and a variety of house and yard plants

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Himalayan salt lamps are very popular these days. They're used in homes to help beautify and refresh the indoor air and provide an attractive, soothing light. They come in a range of calming colors and interesting shapes.

Unfortunately, these lovely lamps may pose an attractive nuisance in homes with pets, especially cats. Kitties, as we know, can jump or climb onto tabletops, dressers, nightstands, kitchen and bathroom counters, bookshelves ... you get the idea.

Anywhere you might place a salt lamp around your home is probably accessible to your cat, and apparently there are kitties who enjoy licking the lamps. I have absolutely no idea how widespread this problem might be. Some cats seem to completely ignore the salt lamps in their homes, while others find them irresistible.

Salt Toxicity in Cats

The problem if your pet licks a salt lamp is that too much salt is toxic to cats (and dogs). In fact, the use of salt to **induce vomiting** in pets is no longer the standard of care and is absolutely not a recommended approach for either pet parents or veterinarians. Symptoms of salt poisoning include:

- Vomiting
- Walking drunk
- Tremors
- Diarrhea
- Abnormal fluid accumulation in the body
- Seizures

- Lack of appetite
- Excessive thirst or urination
- Coma
- Lethargy
- Potential kidney damage
- Death

Treatment for salt poisoning in pets includes administration of intravenous (IV) fluids, electrolyte monitoring, treatment for dehydration and brain swelling and supportive care.¹

Besides salt lamps, other sources of salt around the house include table salt, rock salt (used in de-icers), seawater, homemade play dough, paint balls and enemas containing sodium phosphate. If you suspect your cat has been poisoned by salt, call your veterinarian or an emergency animal hospital immediately.

5 More Surprising Cat Toxins

1. **Topical pain medications containing flurbiprofen — Flurbiprofen** is a human nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) applied to the skin to relieve muscle, joint or other pain. Cats are extremely sensitive to NSAIDs, and reports of five kitties who became ill after their owners applied the medications to their neck or feet prompted an FDA safety alert on these products.²

The medications the five cats ingested contained flurbiprofen and a variety of other active ingredients. Two cats in one family developed kidney failure but recovered with veterinary care. Three cats in another household weren't so lucky. Two of the three developed symptoms that included lack of appetite, lethargy, vomiting, bloody stools, anemia and dilute urine. Sadly, all three ultimately died despite veterinary care.

Veterinarians performed necropsies on all three kitties and found evidence of NSAID toxicity. Since the pet owners applied the medicated cream or lotion to their own bodies and not directly to their cats, it's reasonable to assume one of three likely scenarios occurred:

- The owners applied their medications and then handled their cats without washing their hands.
 - The kitties licked the medication off their owners' skin.
 - The cats rubbed up against their owners, transferring the medication to their fur, and then ingested it during grooming.
2. **Flea/tick spot-on products for dogs —** Never, ever use a canine flea/tick product on your cat. Depending on the ingredients in the product, just a drop has the potential to kill a cat within hours. A few years ago, a newspaper in the Pittsburgh area told the heartbreaking story of four family cats who died over a four-week period because their owners treated them with spot-on products intended for dogs.³

In one tragic case, the owners noticed fleas on both their cats, so they applied "just a drop" of a topical spot-on flea treatment on each kitty. Within hours both cats were very sick and one was having convulsions. The owners immediately took both kitties to a veterinary clinic, but neither survived. In this case, the owners knew the flea treatment was intended for dogs, but figured a small amount would be safe for cats.

3. **Glow sticks and glow jewelry** — For reasons known only to them, many kitties enjoying gnawing on glow sticks and glow jewelry. So many, in fact that these items routinely appear on yearly top 10 cat toxin lists. The liquid inside glow sticks has a foul taste and may cause your cat to salivate excessively. More importantly, they also contain dibutyl phthalate, a chemical that can leak out and burn your cat's fur and tongue. The plastic casing also poses a choking hazard.
4. **Detergent pods** — Most detergents and soaps contain ionic and anionic surfactants. When ingested in small amounts, these chemicals can cause GI upset in a pet, such as excessive drooling, vomiting or diarrhea. Fortunately, it's unlikely your cat would have the opportunity or desire to ingest a large amount of bottled detergent.

Of more concern are those little brightly colored **laundry detergent pods** that smell good and look like candy or some other type of yummy treat to a small child or a pet. It's conceivable that a pet might eat enough pods to cause an obstruction in the GI tract, but the greater danger of laundry and also dish detergent pods is actually the potential for a pet to bite into them and inhale the detergent.

The reason pods are more dangerous for pets than simply licking a bit of spilled detergent off the floor or their fur is the product formulation. The detergent in the pods is both highly concentrated and under pressure. If your kitty bites down on the pod, it can cause the liquid to be forcefully expelled and easily aspirated or swallowed, often in large amounts.

So even if you are using natural detergents in pods, there are still substantial risks. Detergent is foamy, and when an animal ingests it and then vomits, the foam can be pulled into the lungs. In a worst-case scenario, the detergent coats the airways and hampers oxygen exchange in the lungs, which causes suffocation.

5. **Plants, specifically oleanders this time of year** — Many pet parents don't realize how deadly the **oleander plant** can be if ingested by humans, dogs, cats, birds, horses, cows and other animals. The plant only grows in certain regions of the U.S. and isn't especially attractive to animals, which is probably why many people are unaware of the danger it poses.

The common oleander is the prevalent species in the U.S., and is found primarily in warm regions of the south and southwest, California and Hawaii. Every part of the oleander plant, including the roots, stems, leaves, flowers, seeds, fruit, sap and nectar, contains naturally-occurring cardiac glycosides, which are toxins that directly affect the electrolyte balance within the heart muscle.

Even water in which oleander leaves are floating contains these toxins. The roots and stems of the plant contain the highest amount of cardiac glycosides, followed by the leaves and flowers. The most toxic oleanders are thought to be the plants with red flowers.

Oleandrin is the most widely recognized of as many as 30 different cardiac glycosides found in oleanders. Oleandrin acts similarly to the human and veterinary drug digoxin, which is used in the treatment of a variety of heart conditions.

Sources and References

[Bustle January 13, 2017](#)

¹ [Pet Poison Helpline](#)

² [FDA.gov, April 17, 2015](#)

³ [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette September 28, 2013](#)