

## Are You Ready for a Pet Emergency?

Discover the essential steps for inducing vomiting when your pet consumes something dangerous and learn when it's better to seek immediate veterinary help to ensure your furry friend's safety.

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If you're a dog parent, there may come a time when you need to make your dog throw up, typically after an episode of indiscriminate eating
- It's important to be prepared for this possibility whether it happens or not, which means having some basic knowledge of when it's safe, and when it's definitely not safe, to induce vomiting in your pet
- Hydrogen peroxide 3% is the agent of choice for at-home vomiting inducement; again, it's important to know when and how to give it to your dog
- Before trying to make your dog throw up, it's a good idea to call your veterinarian or a pet poison hotline for expert advice

This is a lovely topic: how to make your dog throw up! But the reality is that veterinarians get asked this question quite often. Wise pet parents want to be prepared in case a furry family member swallows something dangerous.

If this isn't something you've ever considered, in my experience, it's better to be safe than sorry. It's better to have the knowledge before or if you need it, rather than need it and not have it in the middle of a crisis with your beloved companion.

### Should I Make My Dog Throw Up, No Matter What?

Let's say you actually see your dog consuming something she shouldn't (because most dogs are indiscriminate eaters). Do you automatically induce vomiting? Not necessarily.

Your dog might, for example, come up the stairs from the basement with something in her mouth. Or maybe you see her in the yard or behind the garage chewing on something.

Sometimes dogs sample plants, both indoors and outside. You might see chew or tooth marks on a plant or notice some of the leaves looked stripped or shredded. You don't necessarily need to induce vomiting in these situations, depending on the circumstances.

### When NOT to Induce Vomiting

Circumstances in which you should not make your dog throw up include:

- **When your dog is already throwing up** — Don't induce more vomiting in an already vomiting animal, because you can make a bad situation worse.
- **When your dog has lost consciousness, has trouble standing, and/or is very weak** — Don't induce vomiting in this situation because **aspiration pneumonia**, which can result when an animal inhales vomit into the lungs, can become a secondary problem.
- **When your dog has swallowed bleach, a drain cleaner, or a petroleum distillate** — These chemicals can cause burning as they are swallowed, and secondary additional burns as they come back up. Don't induce vomiting if your pet has swallowed a caustic substance.
- **If it has been over two hours since your dog ingested a potential toxin** — Once a substance enters your pet's small intestine, vomiting will not clear the stomach of that toxin. Inducing vomiting in an animal who has already digested a potential toxin won't be effective in ridding her body of the substance.

## When You SHOULD Induce Vomiting

- When your pet has consumed antifreeze within the last two hours.
- When you've called your veterinarian, discussed the specific circumstances around your pet's swallowing a potential toxin, and your vet instructs you to induce vomiting.

## How to Use Hydrogen Peroxide to Induce Vomiting

I recommend that the only substance you use at home to make your pet throw up is hydrogen peroxide. I'm talking about 3% hydrogen peroxide — the kind you purchase at any pharmacy. Do not use the stronger, concentrated peroxide found in hair color, use only the 3% kind. The dose is one teaspoon (five milliliters, or cc's) for every 10 pounds of body weight.

*"Keep a fresh, unopened bottle of hydrogen peroxide 3% in your pet first-aid kit," writes veterinarian Debra Eldredge in Whole Dog Journal, "but before using it put in a quick call to your veterinarian or one of the pet poison centers. **The Pet Poison Helpline** at 855-764-7661 or the **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** at 888-426-4435 both charge a fee (which is covered by some pet insurances), but they are worth the cost for expert advice. Both centers are open 24/7, just for emergencies like a 2 a.m. sock snack."*<sup>1</sup>

The hydrogen peroxide must be given orally to your dog. You can mix it with a little vanilla ice cream to make it palatable. I don't advocate feeding ice cream to dogs, of course, but in a situation where it's necessary to make a pet vomit, hydrogen peroxide hidden in sugary ice cream usually gets gobbled up with no argument. You can also try using a little bit of honey if there's no ice cream on hand.

Sometimes, however, it's necessary to just syringe the stuff down your pet's throat (especially when the patient is a cat). After you get the hydrogen peroxide into your dog, walk her around for a few minutes to get her moving, which will help the hydrogen peroxide do its work.

Hydrogen peroxide is an irritant to the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, so it typically induces vomiting of stomach contents within 15 minutes of use. If your pet doesn't vomit within 15 minutes, you can give him a second dose. However, if another 15 minutes pass and he still hasn't vomited, don't give him a third dose of the hydrogen peroxide. It's time to call your veterinarian.

Veterinarians use specific drugs to induce vomiting in pets — apomorphine is used for dogs, and xylazine is used for kitties. These medications are by prescription only and can only be administered by a veterinarian. They can be much more effective at inducing vomiting than hydrogen peroxide. So, if your pet isn't throwing up from your at-home hydrogen peroxide treatment, you should seek veterinary care immediately.

## Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [Whole Dog Journal, May 11, 2024](#)

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