

# How to Reduce Your Pet's Toxic Load, and Why It's So Important

Your pet's body is under near-constant assault from pollutants that can overwhelm their organs of detoxification, including their immune system. Learn how your pet is being exposed to toxins, how to limit that exposure and steps you can take to help their body detoxify safely.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Your pets are exposed to countless toxins in their everyday lives, indoors and outdoors, in their food and water, and through the use of chemical pest preventives and veterinary drugs
- Environmental toxins, including pesticides, electromagnetic fields (EMFs), heavy metals and toxic preservatives in pet foods, contribute significantly to your pet's toxic load and can harm their health over time
- If your pet's body becomes overloaded with toxins, it can interfere with immune system function, which opens the door for serious disease as cell damage occurs and organ function is compromised
- There are many ways you can support your pet's detoxification systems, such as improving the quality of their food, water and indoor air; ensuring they get lots of exercise; and minimizing their exposure to veterinary drugs, including vaccines
- There are also a number of natural detoxifying agents that support and promote the healthy functioning of your pet's toxin-removal organs

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It's actually mind-boggling to think about all the different ways your pet is exposed to toxins in today's world. There's radiation, environmental pesticides, lawn and home chemicals, and electromagnetic fields (EMFs). There are flame retardant chemicals sprayed on many of the fabrics, carpets, furniture and upholstery that your pet sleeps on, bisphenol A (BPA), hydrocarbons, heavy metals, animal hormones and antibiotic residues found in pet foods.

Pets are also exposed to toxic preservatives in pet foods, mycotoxins in kibble, and allergenic ingredients. Food processing techniques can create carcinogenic by-products that pets on dry food diets consume with every single meal.

And then, of course, there's unfiltered drinking water that can contain fluoride, chlorine and other chemicals. There are also the chemicals in flea and tick preventives, plus vaccines, dewormers and other drugs that are routinely prescribed by veterinarians, such as antibiotics and steroids.

If you're wondering if your pet is carrying a toxin load, sadly there's no doubt they are. The truth is that virtually every pet has measurable amounts of chemicals in their body, because they walk through chemicals, sleep on them, breathe them in, and eat and drink them. And unfortunately, veterinarians prescribe and inject them on a regular basis as well.

# Here's What Happens When Too Many Toxins Build Up in Your Pet's Body

When your pet's body accumulates too many toxins, it stores them for future elimination. For many pets, that future opportunity never arrives, and the toxic load begins to impede the body's ability to function. Ultimately, toxic overload can interfere with the immune system to the point where cellular abnormalities like tumors and cysts develop. Other serious diseases may also show up as cells degrade and organ function is impaired.

Side effects of an accumulating toxin load cover a wide range of diseases, from skin conditions to organ failure. There can be behavior problems associated with toxicosis, endocrine disease, autoimmune disease and even cancer.

Your pet's body possesses its own detoxification mechanisms. However, how well they work depends on the animal's toxin load, age and overall health and nutritional status. Your pet's ability to clear accumulated toxins is based on the overall functioning of detoxification pathways. If those pathways aren't working as they should, detoxification systems become stressed or completely overwhelmed.

## 10 Steps to Detoxify Your Pet

Here are 10 ways you can help improve the functioning of your pet's detoxification pathways:

1. **Improve the quality of your pet's diet** — This is one of the best things you can do to improve the well-being and longevity of your pet. If you are still feeding a processed, commercially available diet, your pet is getting a dose of chemical additives, artificial colors and flavors with every bite.

Instead, feed a clean, balanced and species-appropriate diet of fresh foods, preferably raw. Rotate protein sources and strictly limit or eliminate grains and unnecessary carbohydrates.

2. **Provide clean, pure, high-quality drinking water** — Your pet's drinking water shouldn't contain fluoride, heavy metals or other contaminants. Your household tap water probably contains enough toxic minerals, metals, chemicals and other unnecessary substances to damage your pet's health, so it's a good idea to invest in an excellent water filter for your home.

3. **Improve your pet's indoor air quality** — Forbid smoking in your home, and use only nontoxic cleaning products. Consider investing in an air purifier to control dust mites and environmental allergens as well. Avoid polluting your pet's indoor air with synthetic perfumes, air fresheners, plug-ins or toxic dryer sheets. These products are heavily laden with chemicals and are known to cause respiratory problems or worsen respiratory conditions like asthma in both people and pets.

Toxins in the air also come from the off-gassing of chemicals from new synthetic household items like flooring, carpeting, furniture and paint. If you can go green in your home and use an air purifier, you will radically reduce your pet's environmental toxin load.

4. **Make sure your pet gets regular exercise** — Regular exercise provides your pet with countless benefits, including helping the body's detoxification efforts. Physical movement promotes regular elimination, which helps to remove waste from the body in urine and feces.

Exercise stimulates blood circulation and lymphatic drainage, so toxins are moved efficiently to the liver and kidneys for processing. Physical activity also improves respiration and helps your pet eliminate mucus from the respiratory tract.

5. **Minimize exposure to outdoor pollutants and chemicals** — Try to keep your pet away from outdoor areas that are heavily laden with pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers. If your dog likes to eat grass or other outdoor greenery, make sure she's not grazing where chemicals have been sprayed. Also, consider adding some sunflower sprouts to their diet, which will provide the highest food-quality "grazing" fodder you can offer — much more nutritious than grass.

If you're not sure what your pet might have been exposed to or you suspect something in the outdoor environment could be causing skin irritation, consider doing a simple foot soak when you bring them home. Foot soaks remove chemicals and allergens your pet may have picked up on their walk or during other outdoor activities.

6. **Keep veterinary drugs, including vaccines, to an absolute minimum** — Don't subject your pet to yearly revaccinations or unnecessary drugs of any kind, including the two most overprescribed drugs in veterinary medicine, antibiotics and steroids.

Use chemical pest and parasite preventives only when absolutely necessary, and for the minimum time necessary to protect your pet. Look for safe, natural alternatives instead. Very few areas of the U.S. have flea and tick or heartworm problems significant enough to require year-round chemical protection for pets. Don't be talked into giving preventives any more often than absolutely necessary to keep your dog or cat reasonably safe from pests.

7. **Brush and bathe your pet regularly** — Your cat or dog eliminates toxins through their skin, and regularly brushing or combing will remove loose fur and debris and help their skin breathe. Brushing also helps remove toxic residues from your pet's coat, which means they won't be ingesting so much of the stuff when they groom.

Don't hesitate to bathe your pet regularly. Bathing washes allergens away, along with any chemicals or other foreign molecules that may be riding around on their fur. Make sure to use an all-natural, gentle, nontoxic shampoo and conditioner specifically designed for your pet.

8. **Support your pet's liver** — The liver is the primary organ of detoxification in your pet's body. Herbs that assist in liver function and detoxification include burdock root, dandelion root, licorice, Oregon grape, yellow dock and milk thistle. Milk thistle not only helps detoxify the liver, but it is also proven to actually stimulate regeneration of liver cells. Another vital liver nutrient is the detoxifier SAME (S-adenosyl-methionine).
9. **Support your pet's kidneys** — Make sure your pet is getting plenty of clean, pure, fresh drinking water every day both in their bowl and also from a moisture-rich diet. Toxins that travel through the kidneys can become highly concentrated in chronically dehydrated pets, and can damage the tiny, very delicate structures in the kidneys' filtration system.

Also, mineral particles can form when urine is highly concentrated, which may result in crystals or stones that can cause blockages and/or irritation to the urinary tract as well as urinary tract infections.

Herbs that help support kidney function and detoxification include cranberry, dandelion, corn silk, and marshmallow.

10. **Support your pet's lymphatic and immune system** — The lymph and immune systems are also toxin-removal organs in your pet's body. Red clover helps your pet's lymphatic system remove toxins from the tissues of the body. Garlic, echinacea and astragalus help support immune system function as well. Chlorella and spirulina are excellent super-green foods that are great for detoxification.

## More Natural Detoxifiers

The goal of natural detoxifying agents is to support and promote the healthy functioning of your pet's toxin-removal organs, including the liver, kidneys, lymphatic system and immune system. Talk with your holistic veterinarian about what detoxifiers are best for your pet's situation and in what doses.

- **Schisandra fruit** is included in many Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) formulas because it helps protect the liver against various toxins. The hepatoprotective nature of this fruit assists in keeping healthy cells resilient against the effects of environmental toxins.
- **Curcumin** is what gives turmeric its yellow color. This potent antioxidant supports both phase 1 and phase 2 liver detoxification. Curcumin is known to have anti-inflammatory activity because of its ability to inhibit proinflammatory enzymes.

This phytonutrient is anticarcinogenic, which means it fights cancer, primarily due to its ability to heighten the body's detoxification reactions. Studies also indicate curcumin may have a protective effect against mercury and other heavy metals.

- **Phosphatidylcholine** is critical for a detoxification process known as methylation. Pets' bodies are wired with very potent hormones needed for emergencies, but these hormones are very damaging to body tissues with chronic exposure.

The faster your pet's body can get rid of these hormones once they are no longer needed, the less damage is done. The process of getting rid of these hormones is called methylation, and phosphatidylcholine does a great job of assisting with this.

- **Resveratrol** is the active ingredient in the plant known as Japanese knotweed. Resveratrol reduces liver enzyme elevations by reducing lipid peroxidation in the liver. It helps the liver clean house by flushing accumulations of fat so that the organ can function optimally.
- **Catechins** found in green tea dramatically reduce or modify cancer-causing molecules that damage cellular DNA. Inactivation and excretion of carcinogens are also a big part of keeping your pet's body cancer-free for a lifetime. Green tea leaf extract can be very beneficial for your pets in this fashion.
- **Superoxide dismutase (SOD)** is a potent enzyme responsible for the removal of free radicals from your pet's body, which helps your pet's lymphatic system to work optimally.
- **N-acetylcysteine (NAC)** is a cellular antioxidant that boosts your pet's tissue glutathione levels. NAC protects against oxidative stress and is a potent free radical scavenger.

## How Often Should You Detox Your Pet?

Unfortunately, toxins are almost unavoidable for pets, but at least you have a means of helping them cope. If your pet is regularly exposed to toxins such as monthly heartworm pills or monthly applications of flea and tick preventives, an intermittent detox program is recommended. This involves giving a blend of liver and kidney-supportive herbs and nutraceuticals for a week following the administration of any form of chemical preventive.

If your pet has seasonal exposure to toxins, say, through lawn chemicals in the warmer months of the year, then offering seasonal detoxification on a daily basis, from May to November, makes the most sense for your pet.

If your pet has had acute exposure to a toxin, perhaps she ate a toxic plant or has recently undergone antibiotic or

steroid therapy, try following a focused, short-term detoxification protocol, say, for a month following the exposure to the toxin or drug. Consult your holistic veterinarian to determine an appropriate detox protocol in specific doses for your pet.

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