

Macadamia Nut Toxicosis

- Macadamia nuts are a common ingredient in cookies and candies. In dogs, eating macadamia nuts is associated with illness.
- Once eaten, toxic effects can occur within 12 hours.
- It is best to avoid giving human food to your pet unless advised to do so by your veterinarian.

What Is Macadamia Nut Toxicosis?

Macadamia nuts are a common ingredient in cookies and candies. In dogs, eating macadamia nuts is associated with illness. Toxicosis occurs when a dog ingests enough of the nuts to cause damaging effects in the body.

The exact mechanism of macadamia nut toxicosis is unknown. However, even a few ounces of nuts can be enough to cause illness in a small dog.

How Does Macadamia Nut Toxicosis Occur?

Many cases of macadamia nut toxicosis are accidental. A pet may steal food from a countertop or table or find and chew a package of cookies or candy. Unfortunately, other cases of macadamia nut toxicosis occur when dogs are given a product containing macadamia nuts. It is best to avoid giving human food to your pet unless advised to do so by your veterinarian.

What Are the Clinical Signs of Macadamia Nut Toxicosis?

Signs of macadamia nut toxicosis may occur within 12 hours of eating the nuts and include the following:

- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Joint pain, limping, inability to stand
- Fever
- Pale gums
- Weakness, tremors, incoordination when walking

What Are the Diagnosis, Treatment, and Outcome for Macadamia Nut Toxicosis?

Diagnosis of macadamia nut toxicosis is commonly based on a history of recently eating nuts. Specific diagnostic testing is generally not required.

If it is recognized quickly (within 1 hour) that a pet has eaten macadamia nuts, vomiting can be induced to remove the material from the stomach and limit further absorption. Your veterinarian may also administer a special preparation of liquid-activated charcoal to slow absorption of material from the stomach and intestines.

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There is no specific antidote for macadamia nut toxicosis. In many cases, clinical signs resolve without treatment after approximately 48 hours. Pets that are elderly or already sick from another condition may do better with hospitalization and supportive treatment. This may include fluid therapy, medications to help control vomiting, and monitoring of vital signs.

Macadamia nut toxicosis tends not to be fatal, and most pets recover fully. However, the clinical signs of toxicosis can be distressing to you and your pet. Fortunately, toxicosis can be easily avoided by preventing your pets from having access to foods containing macadamia nuts.