

Why is my dog eating grass, poop and sticks?

Many pet owners assume their dog's weird eating stems from a nutrient deficiency, but there's little evidence to support that idea. Here's why:



GRASS While for some dogs grass-eating is linked to vomiting, many otherwise well dogs eat grass and other plants. It's pretty normal, but put a stop to it if your dog is vomiting often, eating grass treated with insecticides or fertilizers or nosing on toxic plants (search "toxic plants" at aspca.org).

POOP Many dogs will eat other animal's droppings (even their own!) if given the opportunity. Yes, it's gross, but poop *might* taste good to dogs. It's still best to limit your pet's access to poop to prevent infections like *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and worms.

STICKS, BALLS, SOCKS, ETC. When dogs are bored or stressed they may eat toys and sticks, but try to prevent this. Objects like these can get lodged in the digestive tract and the dog may require emergency surgery.

BOTTOM LINE: Eating these kinds of things is pretty normal behavior for dogs, so don't worry. However, if your dog seems constantly hungry or repeatedly eats nonfood items, consult your veterinarian.

—Cailin Heinze, VMD, MS, DACVN
@C_HeinzeVMD

Breakfast LIKE A King

700-Calorie Skillet Breakfast

Instead of double-fisting croissants, try our hearty breakfast skillet, shown here in an 8-inch pan. It's made with potatoes, eggs, Cheddar, a little bacon and lots of spinach. Get the recipe at eatingwell.com/webextra

Front-loading your calories just might help you shed pounds, according to a recent study in *Obesity*. People who ate their largest meal (700 calories) in the morning lost 11 pounds more over 12 weeks than people who consumed the bulk of their calories at dinner—even though they ate the same amount of daily calories (1,400). The big-breakfast eaters were also less likely to crave snacks later in the day (they had lower levels of ghrelin, the hormone that signals hunger) and were more likely to stick to their diet.

The big-breakfast eaters, however, ate only 200 calories for dinner, which may not be realistic for most of us. Lead researcher Daniela Jakubowicz, M.D., of the Wolfson Medical Center in Israel, suggests eating a protein-packed breakfast that also contains some carbohydrates, and loading up on vegetables with a small serving of protein in the evening to maximize weight loss.

Can't get into a big breakfast? Even just eating lunch as a main meal earlier (before 3 p.m. vs. after 3 p.m.) helped people in Spain lose more weight in an *International Journal of Obesity* study. Early eaters lost an average of 22 pounds during a 20-week weight-loss program, while late eaters lost about 17 pounds. —Lori Miller Kase