

All About Pets

The national pet care information service



HIDDEN DANGERS FOR CATS



THE BLUE CROSS

Britain's pet charity

Cats are curious and playful creatures – unfortunately these charming characteristics can get them into scrapes.

Road accidents

Cars are the greatest danger for cats. Keeping your cat indoors at night is a good idea (serving a tasty morsel at nightfall will encourage your pet to come home). Failing that, a reflective collar makes your pet more visible.

Falling

Cats love to climb, but they can also fall. Falls from balconies are common and can cause horrific injuries. Prevent falls by making balconies and windows safe with wire mesh.





Poisonous plants

There are many plants that are poisonous to cats, although fortunately most cats rarely pay them any attention. Young cats, and especially indoor cats are most at risk as they may chew houseplants through curiosity or boredom. Particularly dangerous are Dieffenbachia (Dumb Cane or Leopard Lily), Liliun longiflorum (Easter Lily) and some other members of the Liliun and Hemerocallis family. Even small quantities of Lily leaf can be dangerous. Do not have these as house plants if you have a cat. Other potentially poisonous common plants include Cyclamen, Poinsettia and Amaryllis. Be careful also when you are working in the garden. Your cat may take an unhealthy interest in discarded plant material, so remove it promptly.

Out of the frying pan and into the fire...

Watch out when you are cooking – it's easy to trip over a pet and accidentally spill something hot on them. Cats can also jump up onto hot surfaces or pans.

Stitched up?

Cats are fond of chasing bits of thread. These can cause problems in two ways – needles can get stuck in the mouth and throat or, more seriously, the thread itself may be swallowed causing the bowel to become tucked-up and telescoped on itself. Thread can even tighten to act like a cheese wire and cut the bowel. This is extremely dangerous and requires surgery. Also be careful that your cat doesn't eat tinsel at Christmas time, chew electric cables or raid rubbish and eat string that has been used to tie up meat.

Chemical poisons

Keep all cleaning and garden chemicals safely shut away. Don't forget that cats lick their paws, so keep your cat indoors during use and for a while afterwards. Slug pellets are very poisonous so either use a non-toxic form of slug control, or cover treated areas with chicken wire so pets cannot get to them. Antifreeze is extremely toxic, so store and dispose of it safely.

Rat and mice poisons are another hazard for cats, both through eating the bait and from catching poisoned rodents. Many of these poisons are coloured for easy identification – so if you have seen the bait, make a note of its colour.

Don't forget the coat...

Cats are prone to poisoning from licking chemicals off their coats or paws. If your cat's coat becomes soiled, use an Elizabethan collar or wrap in a towel to prevent licking. You can try to remove small amounts of chemicals with water only, or by clipping off affected hair. If contamination is severe, contact your vet immediately.



Flea collars and spot-ons from the pet shop

These may cause poisoning in cats. It is better to use a flea control product from the vet. However, if you prefer to use a pet shop or supermarket product, follow the directions and make sure you do not use a product meant for dogs, or for treating the house, on your cat. Remove flea collars before you apply any other flea treatment. Do not use any two types of flea treatment together. Signs of poisoning include shakiness, dribbling and fits. Contact the vet immediately. Remember – always read the label before you give your pet any medicines.

Herbal products

Cats are not humans. The way their bodies work is very different and many human medicines are poisonous to cats, especially painkillers. Very small quantities can kill. This also applies to some herbal products, including tea tree oil and citrus oils. There is concern that long term use of garlic may also cause problems.



I think my cat has been poisoned...

If you think your cat has eaten something dangerous, contact the vet immediately (phone the emergency number if necessary). Have any packaging to hand so that you can tell the vet exactly what the substance is. If you have seen your cat chewing something, take samples along to the vet. Don't try to make your cat sick without asking the vet. If your cat is staggering or fitting, clear obstacles so it cannot hurt itself and make the room dark and quiet.

Be aware that some illnesses can look like poisoning, such as kidney disease or severe gastroenteritis – both of which can have a sudden start.

Further information

For further information and advice on caring for your pet or horse visit www.allaboutpets.org.uk, the national pet care information service. Alternatively, you can write to us at the address below to request a list of available leaflets.

All About Pets is provided by The Blue Cross, Britain's pet charity. We rely entirely on your support to enable us to continue our vital work. Any contribution would be most welcome. Thank you.



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Registered charity no: 224392

Photography: John Henderson • Indusfoto