

How to Induce Vomiting

BACKGROUND

If your dog has ingested a toxic substance, your veterinarian may instruct you to induce vomiting. Ensure that your veterinarian knows what your dog has ingested; with some toxic substances such as bleaches, acids, alkalis, or petroleum distillates, triggering vomiting can cause more damage than allowing the substance to pass normally. If your dog already shows signs of toxicity (i.e., symptoms due to having eaten or drunk something that is potentially harmful), it is likely too late for vomiting to help, and you should instead seek immediate veterinary care. Only induce vomiting under the direction of a veterinarian. There is no safe way to induce vomiting at home in a cat, so it is best to seek veterinary care immediately if your pet cat ingests a toxic substance.

GETTING STARTED

Equipment/materials needed:

- 12-mL syringe, or standard kitchen turkey baster and measuring spoons
- 3% hydrogen peroxide (the kind found in a pharmacy to disinfect cuts and abrasions)
- Tap water

TROUBLESHOOTING BEFOREHAND

With the more common household toxins such as chocolate, slug bait, and rat poison, there is minimal risk of complications, and induction of vomiting is felt to be beneficial.

After your pet has vomited, take him/her to your veterinarian immediately; medications such as activated charcoal which adsorb (inactivate) toxins may also be administered.

Be sure to use 3% hydrogen peroxide, which is the standard product available in pharmacies, and not 30% hydrogen peroxide used for bleaching hair (corrosive).

Historically, some veterinary sources have recommended using table salt as an alternative if hydrogen peroxide is unavailable. This *cannot* be recommended under any circumstance, because vomiting occurs in only a few patients, but poisoning due to excess salt (sodium toxicosis) is a significant and common complication.

PROCEDURE

The goal is to produce vomiting by giving an emetogenic (nausea-inducing) substance.

- If your dog has not eaten a meal in the past few hours, you should offer him/her a tasty meal immediately. For example, dogs that

rarely eat a certain type of tasty food (such as canned food, if the pet loves it but normally only eats kibble) should be offered a meal-size portion of that food. The goal is to have bulk in the stomach so vomiting brings up both the just-eaten food and the ingested toxic substance. Skipping this step is optional, and there should never be a delay in inducing vomiting just because the pet won't eat. Still, if he/she eats willingly, vomiting on an empty stomach ("dry heaves") can be avoided.

- Draw up into a syringe approximately 1 mL of peroxide per pound of body weight (2 mL/kg), with a maximum of 45 mL. If you do not have a syringe, measure the amounts given below, and draw the fluid up into a turkey baster. This corresponds to (approximately):
 - 1 teaspoon (5 mL) for a small dog such as a miniature poodle or Yorkshire terrier
 - 1 tablespoon (15 mL) for a medium-size dog such as a beagle
 - 3 tablespoons (45 mL) for large-breed dogs such as Labradors, golden retrievers, rottweilers, and the like
- With the desired amount in the syringe or turkey baster, gently introduce the tip of the syringe or turkey baster into the corner of the pet's mouth without opening the mouth. The teeth can stay clenched (that is, the mouth can stay closed) as long as the tip of the syringe or turkey baster is in the cheek pouch just past the corner of the lips.
- Keep the head parallel to the floor or pointing very slightly upward toward the ceiling, and depress the plunger (or squeeze the baster bulb) to administer the hydrogen peroxide into the cheek pouch. It does not have to be very rapid or very slow; the whole amount should go in over a period of perhaps 3 to 5 seconds, often accompanied by licking movements of the tongue as the pet swallows the peroxide. Keeping the head elevated (lift the pet's chin) helps ensure that the peroxide trickles to the back of the mouth and is swallowed.
- Your pet should begin foaming at the mouth, then vomit.
- Once you feel your pet has vomited all of the contents of the stomach, you may rinse the mouth out with water (optional).
- Go to your veterinary hospital immediately.

AFTERWARDS

Even after a pet has vomited, toxic residue may remain in the gastrointestinal tract. The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center can be contacted to obtain the best treatment protocol for that particular poison (888-426-4435). Many local urban poison control centers (for people) also have excellent information banks.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are some common poisonous plants my pet may ingest? Should I induce vomiting with these plants?

The most common poisonous plants include lilies, marijuana, sago palm, tulip/narcissus bulbs, azalea/rhododendron, oleander, castor bean, cyclamen, kalanchoe, yew, amaryllis, autumn crocus, chrysanthemum, English ivy, peace lily (also known as Mauna Loa peace lily), pothos, and schefflera. You may safely induce vomiting if you suspect a recent (<12 hours old) ingestion of any of these plants.

What if my pet does not vomit with the initial amount of peroxide?

If your pet does not vomit within 15 minutes of the initial dose, you may give an additional amount of 0.5 mL per pound of body

weight (1 mL per kg), once. After this second dose, do not give any more peroxide to your pet. Take your pet to the veterinarian instead.

Are there alternatives to hydrogen peroxide?

Yes, syrup of ipecac (follow dosage directions on label of product; concentration-dependent) is suitable. As mentioned above, table salt is not recommended; it is a folk remedy for inducing vomiting and while it can do so, it also has caused its own substantial share of problems (sodium poisoning). Your veterinarian will have other drugs that can induce vomiting, as well as the ability to “pump the stomach” if need be, or to give an antidote if one exists.

Practice Stamp or Name & Address

Also available in Spanish.