



ACETAMINOPHEN TOXICITY

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Acetaminophen is a pain reliever and fever reducing medication. **Acetaminophen** is highly toxic to both canine and feline patients. Ingestion of **acetaminophen** can ultimately lead to severely low red blood cell count and liver failure.

Feline patients are more sensitive than dogs and will show signs of toxicity with lower doses.

Clinical signs of ingestion in canine patients may not be apparent for several days after ingestion, which can include lethargy, anorexia (unwillingness to eat), vomiting, and abdominal pain. Eventually these patients can suffer from liver failure and become icteric (mucous membranes turn yellow).

Clinical signs of ingestion in feline patients are usually apparent within a few hours of ingestion, which can include excessive salivation, swelling of the face/paws, lethargy, and anemia. These patients may also progress to liver failure.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A thorough clinical history and physical examination with a veterinarian will yield a presumptive diagnosis.

There is no confirmatory test for **acetaminophen** ingestion; however, bloodwork can be supportive of a presumptive diagnosis.

TREATMENT

If the patient is seen within the first few hours of ingestion, vomiting can be induced to clear the stomach of any remaining **acetaminophen** and activated charcoal can be administered to bind any potential toxin that is present throughout the intestinal tract.

These patients can then be started on intravenous (IV) fluid administration. Additionally, these patients can be started on liver protectant medications.

Serial lab work should be performed while hospitalized to check for the presence and extent of liver damage in both dogs and cats. These patients should also be monitored for anemia (especially in cats).

In patients that present with severe anemia, oxygen therapy and blood transfusions may be necessary.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Keep medications put away in locations that pets do not have access to. Many pets get toxicities from chewing through medication bottles.
- Contact the Pet Poison Helpline (855.764.7661) for immediate triage of toxicities.
- Seek immediate care for interventional therapies.