

BLUE CROSS ANIMAL HOSPITAL

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Xylitol Artificial Sweetener Toxicity in Dogs

Xylitol is a common sugar substitute, often found in sugarless gum.

Symptoms:

1. Vomiting (usually seen first)
2. Weakness (signs of low blood glucose)
3. Diarrhea may occur
4. Tremors and disorientation
5. Can progress to collapse or potentially seizures
6. Liver damage or failure can occur even in the absence of the above signs

Why Xylitol is toxic to dogs:

Xylitol is absorbed slowly in humans and has little to no effect on blood sugar or insulin levels. However, in dogs, xylitol is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream causing a sudden release of insulin. Since xylitol is not available to be utilized as a sugar the sudden increase in insulin leads to the drop in real blood glucose.

Liver damage is another potential adverse affect of xylitol in the dog. The amount of xylitol required for this to occur is higher than the dose required to drop blood glucose levels. However sudden liver disease or failure can occur without the typical low blood glucose symptoms.

The amount of Xylitol required to be toxic:

The amount of xylitol required to be toxic to a dog is quite low. About 0.1 gram per kilogram of body weight. As little as 1 ½ pieces of gum could be toxic to a 10 lb (4.5 Kg) dog. Xylitol toxicity in cats is unknown and has not been reported.

Please seek veterinary attention immediately if you think your dog has eaten xylitol. For more detailed information please see the associated links:

<http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&A=2859>

<http://www.veterinarypartnr.com/Content.plx?P=A&A=2875>