

This Hidden Threat Is Making Pets Sick All Over the Country

Given the odds, it's easy to see why this mostly invisible, underrated threat is so common, and is the trigger behind far more diseases than most people realize. But take heart - you could add a significant loving lifespan to your pet by mopping up the threat. Here's how.

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Every pet carries a measurable toxin load because toxins and chemicals are unavoidable in today's world
- If your pet's toxic burden overwhelms his body's ability to naturally eliminate those toxins, it can damage his health
- There are many steps you can take to minimize your pet's exposure to toxins and support the organs of her body responsible for detoxification
- For many pets, a regular detoxification protocol can also be very beneficial

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It's mind boggling to think about all the different ways our pets are exposed to toxins and chemicals in today's world. There's radiation, environmental pesticides, lawn and home chemicals, electromagnetic fields (EMFs), flame-retardants, bisphenol A (BPA), hydrocarbons and heavy metals.

There are also synthetic hormones and antibiotic residues in the animal meat used in pet food, as well as potentially toxic preservatives, mycotoxins in grain-based kibble, and allergenic ingredients. Unfiltered drinking water containing fluoride, chlorine and heavy metals can be another source of toxins.

And then there are the chemicals in flea and tick preventives, plus vaccines, dewormers and other drugs such as antibiotics and steroids that are routinely prescribed by veterinarians.

If you're wondering if your own pet is carrying a toxin load, sadly, there's no doubt he is. The truth is that virtually every pet has measurable amounts of chemicals in their body, because they walk through them, sleep on them, breathe them, drink and eat them, and veterinarians prescribe and inject them.

Effects of Toxins on Pets

When your pet's body accumulates too many toxins, it stores them for future elimination. But for many pets, that future opportunity never arrives and the toxic load begins to impede the functioning of vital organ systems.

Ultimately, toxic overload can interfere with the immune system to the point where cellular abnormalities like tumors and cysts can develop. Other serious diseases may also show up as cells degrade and organ function is impaired.

Side effects of an accumulating toxin load over time can show up as **skin conditions**, behavior problems, endocrine disease, autoimmune disease, organ failure and even many forms of cancer.

Your pet's body possesses its own detoxification mechanisms. How well they work depends on his or her toxin load, recurrent exposure to toxins, age, genetics, overall health status and vitality.

10 Ways to Help Your Pet's Body Detoxify

Your pet's ability to clear accumulated toxins is based on the overall functioning of detoxification pathways. If those pathways aren't working as they should, detoxification systems become stressed or completely overwhelmed.

Fortunately, there are many ways you can assist your pet's detoxification mechanisms to help them function optimally, including:

1. **Evaluate the quality of your pet's diet** — This is one of the very best things you can do to improve the well-being and longevity of your pet.

If you're feeding a processed dry food diet, your pet is getting a dose of chemical additives and carcinogenic by-products like heterocyclic amines and acrylamides with every bite.

I recommend switching to a clean, balanced and fresh food diet. I also recommend rotating protein sources and strictly limiting or eliminating grains in the diet.

Remember that "grain-free" kibble has just as many synthetic nutrients and usually a higher glycemic index than regular kibble, so **pets eating grain-free food are really no better off** when it comes to dietary stress.

2. **Provide clean, pure and high-quality drinking water** — Your pet's drinking water shouldn't contain fluoride, chlorine, heavy metals or other contaminants.

Household tap water typically contains enough toxic minerals, metals, chemicals and other unhealthy substances to damage your pet's health long term. I recommend filtering not only your pet's drinking water, but also yours.

3. **Improve your pet's indoor air quality** — Forbid smoking in your home, and use only nontoxic cleaning products. Consider investing in an air purifier to control dust mites.

Avoid polluting your pet's indoor air quality with perfumes, air fresheners, scented plug-ins or dryer sheets. These products are heavily laden with chemicals and are known to cause or worsen respiratory conditions like asthma in both people and pets.

Toxins in the air also come from the off-gassing of chemicals from new synthetic household items like flooring, carpeting, furniture, drapes and even pet beds. Unless you're providing an organic, pet bed made without chemicals that specifically says that it contains all-natural fibers and hasn't been chemically treated, you should assume it has been treated with flame retardants.

4. **Make sure your pet gets regular exercise** — Regular exercise provides your dog or cat with countless benefits, including helping the body's detoxification efforts. Physical movement promotes regular elimination, which helps move waste from the body in the form of urine and feces.

Exercise stimulates blood circulation and the lymphatic system, so toxins are moved efficiently to the liver and kidneys for processing. Physical activity also improves respiration and helps your pet eliminate mucus from the respiratory tract.

5. **Minimize exposure to outdoor pollutants and chemicals** — Try to keep your pet away from outdoor areas that are heavily laden pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers. If your dog likes to eat grass or other outdoor greenery, make sure she's not grazing where chemicals have been sprayed.

I also recommend adding organic sunflower sprouts to her diet to help reduce her need to forage outside. If you have an indoor cat, you can consider growing wheatgrass to satisfy his need to nibble as well.

If you're not sure what your pet may have been exposed to or you suspect something outside is causing skin irritation, do a simple foot soak when you bring her home. A very basic footbath can make a dramatic difference in reducing your pet's overall chemical burden.

6. **Keep veterinary drugs, including unnecessary vaccines, to an absolute minimum** — Don't subject your pet to unnecessary yearly re-vaccinations or drugs, including the two most overprescribed drugs in veterinary medicine, antibiotics and steroids.

Veterinarians often send clients home with these two drugs because they don't know what else to do to help your pet. We weren't taught in vet school to address the root cause of disease, so the alternative is to hand out pharmaceuticals that will hopefully ease the pet's symptoms.

Most veterinarians don't have enough tools in their toolbox to help pets with certain disorders, for example, dogs with recurrent skin conditions, so the fallback is usually a vicious cycle of antibiotics and steroids.

My recommendation is to accept antibiotic therapy for your pet only if your vet can demonstrate they are the best choice for an identified strain of bacteria. If the offending organism isn't identified, it's bad medicine to simply guess at which antibiotic may work.

I also recommend that you refuse annual deworming of your pet "just because." If your dog or cat has been diagnosed with specific parasites, your vet may reasonably recommend a dewormer.

But just say no to chemicals given once a month (e.g., a heartworm preventive that may be unnecessary), or twice a year in the case of most general dewormers. Just say no, and you can reduce your pet's chemical burden and support his or her detoxification mechanisms.

Use chemical pest and parasite preventives only when absolutely necessary, and for the minimum time necessary to protect your pet. Look for safe, natural alternatives to monthly chemical preventives. Very few areas in the U.S. have flea and tick or heartworm problems year round.

You can ask your veterinarian or do your own research and learn the minimum dose needed to effectively protect your pet during pest season.

7. **Brush and bathe your pet regularly** — Your cat or dog eliminates toxins through his skin, and regularly brushing or combing will remove loose fur and debris and help his skin breathe via exfoliation. Brushing also helps remove toxic residues from your pet's coat, which means he won't be ingesting them when he grooms.

Don't hesitate to **bathe your dog regularly**, especially if he's been exposed to chemicals or has irritated skin. Bathing washes allergens away, along with any chemicals and other foreign molecules that might be riding around on his fur. Make sure to use an **all-natural, nontoxic shampoo and conditioner** specifically designed for pets.

8. **Support your pet's liver** — The liver is the primary organ of detoxification in your pet's body. There are many herbs that assist liver function and detoxification, including burdock root, dandelion root, licorice, Oregon grape root, yellow dock and milk thistle.

Milk thistle not only helps detoxify the liver, but it is proven to help stimulate regeneration of liver cells. Another vital liver detoxifier is S-adenosylmethionine (SAME).

9. **Support your pet's kidneys** — Make sure your pet is getting plenty of clean pure water each day — both in her diet and at the water bowl. Toxins that travel through the kidneys can become highly concentrated in chronically dehydrated pets, and can damage the tiny structures in the kidneys' filtration system.

Also, mineral particles can form when urine is highly concentrated, which may result in **crystals or stones** that can cause blockages and/or irritation to urinary tract structures, as well as infections. Herbs that help support kidney detoxification include cranberry, corn silk and marshmallow.

10. **Support your pet's lymphatic and immune system** — The lymph and immune systems are also toxin-removal organs. Red clover and cleavers help your pet's lymphatic system remove toxins from the tissues of the body. Garlic and turmeric (curcumin) help support immune system function. Chlorella is a super green food that is excellent for detoxification.

More Natural Detoxifiers

The goal of natural detoxification agents is to support and promote healthy functioning of your pet's toxin-removal organs, including the liver, kidneys, lymphatic system and immune system. I recommend you talk with your holistic vet about what detoxifiers are appropriate for your pet's individual needs, and in what doses.

- **Phosphatidylserine** is critical for a detoxification process known as methylation. Pets' bodies are wired with very potent hormones (e.g., adrenaline and cortisol) needed for emergencies, but these hormones can be very damaging to body tissues with chronic exposure.

The faster your pet's body can get rid of these hormones once they're no longer needed, the less damage is done. The process of getting rid of these hormones is called methylation.

- **Resveratrol** is the active ingredient in the plant known as Japanese knotweed. Resveratrol reduces liver enzyme elevations by reducing lipid peroxidation in the liver. It helps the liver clean house by flushing accumulations of fat so the organ can function optimally.
- The catechins found in **green tea** dramatically modify cancer-causing molecules that damage cellular DNA. Inactivation and excretion of carcinogens is a big part of keeping your pet's body cancer-free for a lifetime. Green tea extract (decaffeinated, of course) can be very beneficial for your pet.

- **Superoxide dismutase**, also called SOD, is a potent enzyme responsible for the removal of free radicals from your pet's body, which helps the lymphatic system work optimally.

How Often Should I Detoxify?

Unfortunately, toxins are almost unavoidable for our pets, but at least we have a means of helping them cope. If your pet is regularly exposed to toxins such as monthly heartworm, flea and tick preventives, I recommend a week of detoxification after those chemicals are fed or applied.

If your pet has seasonal exposure to toxins, say, in the warmer months of the year, offering seasonal detoxification makes sense. Provide detox a week or 10 days after chemicals have been sprayed outdoors, on a monthly basis if your pet spends much time in that environment.

If your pet has had an acute episode of a toxic exposure — perhaps she nibbled a toxic plant or has recently undergone antibiotic or steroid therapy — I recommend a focused, short-term detoxification protocol. Almost every pet can benefit from a targeted detox program, depending on his or her age, lifestyle, diet and chemical exposure. Talk with your **integrative or holistic vet** about what type of protocol, dosages, and duration is best for your animal companion.
