

Is This Cozy Kitchen Favorite Dog-Approved?

This warm, sweet spice makes everything feel inviting, and when used correctly, it can support your dog's well-being.

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Cinnamon has been used for thousands of years in many cultures, with uses that extend beyond cooking
- Ceylon cinnamon, or "true cinnamon," is the safe choice for dogs because it contains lower levels of coumarin, while Cassia cinnamon should be avoided
- To keep cinnamon safe, use only tiny amounts, mix it into food, avoid sticks and spice blends, and never offer cinnamon rolls, cereals, pastries, or pumpkin spice products
- Nutmeg and pumpkin-spice blends are unsafe for dogs because they contain myristicin, which can lead to serious health problems for your dog
- If your dog ingests too much cinnamon or any cinnamon essential oil, do not induce vomiting at home and contact your veterinarian or poison control instead

You probably know cinnamon as the spice that makes your kitchen smell amazing during the holidays or when you bake something special. But did you know it's also one of the world's oldest spices? For thousands of years, people have used cinnamon not only for its flavor but also as part of traditional herbal medicine.¹

Today, it's still a favorite in sweet treats like cinnamon rolls and mulled wine.² But here's what might surprise you — cinnamon isn't just for people. When used correctly, it can offer significant benefits for your dog as well.

The Surprisingly Rich Story of Cinnamon

Cinnamon may seem like an everyday kitchen spice, but it has a rich and intriguing history. It is derived from the inner bark of evergreen trees in the *Cinnamomum* genus, primarily found in Sri Lanka and southern India. Farmers harvest the bark, dry it, and it curls into the characteristic 'quills' that are commonly seen in jars at the store.³

The name *Cinnamomum* originates from the ancient Hebrew and Arabic word *amomon*, meaning "fragrant spice plant." Around the world, cinnamon is known by many different names, such as *ròuguì* in Chinese, *dalchini* in Hindi, *canela* in Spanish, *cannelle* in French, *qarfa* in Arabic, and *zimt* in German.⁴

People have used cinnamon for thousands of years. Ancient Chinese writings mention it as early as 4,000 B.C. It appears in the Old Testament, in Sanskrit texts, and in records from ancient Egypt, where it was used for cooking, healing, and even embalming because of its strong, clean scent.⁵

The Greeks and Romans also valued cinnamon as a healing spice, rather than a seasoning. During the Middle Ages, it became a favorite in European kitchens. French cooks mixed it with ginger, and in medieval feasts, they used it in sauces, wines, and desserts. Having plenty of cinnamon was even seen as a sign of wealth and good taste.⁶

Over time, cinnamon made its way into everything from baked goods to chocolate and cola. Today, it's still one of the world's favorite spices. But here's something you may not know: not all cinnamon is created equal, and that difference matters more than you might think when it comes to your pet.⁷

What Every Pet Parent Should Know About Cinnamon

Now it's time to answer the question almost every pet parent asks: Is cinnamon safe for your dog? After learning how beloved this spice is around the world, it's natural to wonder whether this familiar flavor is something you can safely share with your pup.

- **Ceylon cinnamon** — According to the Adored Beast Apothecary, it is known as "true cinnamon." It's lighter in color, mildly sweet, and has very low coumarin levels, making it a safer choice. This compound can strain the liver and kidneys if consumed in large amounts over time. A small sprinkle of Ceylon cinnamon now and then is generally considered safe for dogs.⁸
- **Cassia cinnamon** — This is the darker, stronger variety sold in stores. It contains high levels of coumarin, which can harm dogs and should be avoided to protect their health.⁹

Reasons to Love Cinnamon

Beyond its cozy aroma, cinnamon can offer gentle wellness benefits when used in moderation. It's not a cure or a substitute for veterinary care, but it can be a simple, natural way to add a little extra support to your dog's routine.

- **Helps dogs maintain a healthy weight** — Did you know that 54% of dogs in America today are obese? Dogs Naturally reports a 79% rise in diabetes over 12 years. Adding 1/8 teaspoon (tsp) of cinnamon per 15 pounds can help regulate blood sugar.¹⁰
- **Eases inflammation and joint stiffness** — The natural anti-inflammatory properties in cinnamon may help soothe discomfort, especially in aging dogs or those with arthritis.¹¹
- **Protects cells with antioxidants** — Everyday stress takes a toll on your pet's body, but cinnamon's antioxidants can help protect against that damage. They also support your dog's immune system by fighting free radicals and reducing oxidative stress.¹²
- **Aids digestion** — A small sprinkle may help soothe digestion by calming down an upset tummy or can even prevent bloating.¹³
- **Supports heart health** — Cinnamon may help support heart health by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, which can be especially beneficial for dogs with heart issues.¹⁴

Integrating Cinnamon into Your Pet's Lifestyle

Before adding cinnamon to your dog's routine, it's essential to understand how to use it safely. Most of the risk comes from using the wrong type of cinnamon or overusing it. Here are guidelines for you to remember:

- **A little goes a long way —** For small dogs, use about $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of cinnamon. Larger dogs can have up to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon.¹⁵ For medium dogs, Dogs Naturally suggests mixing $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of cinnamon with one tablespoon of raw honey.¹⁶
- **If your pet has pre-existing conditions, use cinnamon with caution —** Cassia cinnamon can harm your dog's liver and kidneys because of its high coumarin content. Use it sparingly and opt for Ceylon cinnamon for a safer alternative.¹⁷
- **Mix cinnamon into food —** Letting your dog lick dry cinnamon powder can irritate their mouth or throat.¹⁸
- **Avoid cinnamon for pregnant dogs —** Cinnamon may stimulate the uterus and should not be given during pregnancy.¹⁹
- **Choose powder, not sticks —** Sticks can splinter, pose a choking hazard, and are too strong for dogs.²⁰
- **Watch for reactions —** If this is your dog's first time trying cinnamon, watch for signs of itching, swelling, stomach upset, or other allergic side effects.²¹

Safe Cinnamon Treats for Your Pet

If you love making homemade treats, cinnamon is a flavorful way to add a cozy twist while keeping every ingredient safe for your dog. Below are a couple of cinnamon-infused recipes you can try.^{22,23}

Raw Pumpkin Spice Dog Treats

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup canned pure pumpkin
- 1 tablespoon raw honey
- 2 teaspoons Ceylon cinnamon
- 4 cups almond flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Procedure:

1. Mix all the ingredients in a large bowl. Add more almond flour if the dough feels sticky.
2. Roll the dough into small, dog-friendly balls and refrigerate until firm. These treats will keep in the refrigerator for up to one week or in the freezer for up to six months.

Cinnamon Peanut Butter Dog Biscuits

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of almond flour
- 1/2 teaspoon of Ceylon cinnamon
- 1/4 cup of unsweetened, xylitol-free peanut butter
- 1/2 cup of water
- 1 tablespoon of honey (for sweetness)

Procedure:

1. Combine all the ingredients in a bowl to make a dough.
2. Roll out the dough on a floured surface, then cut into shapes with cookie cutters.
3. Place the biscuits on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake at 350 degrees F for 15 to 20 minutes, until golden and firm.
4. Let them cool completely before serving. Store in an airtight container for up to two weeks.

Cinnamon Goodies Aren't Always Dog-Friendly

Even though a sprinkle of cinnamon can be safe, many human foods made with this spice aren't suitable for your furry best friend. The problem usually isn't the cinnamon itself; it's the extra ingredients that come with it.

Cinnamon rolls, breads, and pastries often contain ingredients that can be harmful to dogs, such as raisins, chocolate, or excessive amounts of sugar and butter. Raw dough is especially dangerous because yeast can expand inside your dog's stomach and cause a serious emergency. Even baked treats can upset the digestive system and may lead to diarrhea, pancreatitis, and vomiting.²⁴

Breakfast favorites like cinnamon cereal, oatmeal, applesauce, or cinnamon-sugar toppings often contain excessive amounts of sugar and preservatives. They may also include spice blends that aren't safe for dogs.²⁵

One hidden risk is nutmeg, a spice often paired with cinnamon in recipes. Nutmeg has myristicin, a compound that can cause confusion, rapid heart rate, dry mouth, lethargy, high blood pressure, stomach pain, and even seizures if eaten in large amounts. While severe toxicity usually requires one to three tablespoons, even small amounts can upset your dog's stomach. Pumpkin spice products fall into the same category — they may smell like cinnamon, but they often include nutmeg and other unsafe spices.²⁶

What to Do in Case of Excess Cinnamon Ingestion

Cinnamon may seem harmless, but it can pose risks to dogs, depending on the amount and form. If your dog has eaten too much cinnamon, chewed up a cinnamon stick, or ingested any amount of cinnamon essential oils, follow these steps to keep them safe:²⁷

1. Do not induce vomiting at home.
2. Contact your veterinarian and the Pet Poison Helpline.
3. Look for coughing, choking, difficulty breathing, excessive drooling, or mouth irritation such as redness or blisters.
4. If your pet ingested essential oil or a cinnamon stick, go to the nearest veterinary clinic.
5. Be ready for tests or supportive care your vet may suggest, which can include bloodwork, urine tests, IV fluids, and soft foods.

Sometimes the most meaningful ways to support wellness start with the simplest things already in your kitchen. Cinnamon may be a familiar spice, but its story goes beyond flavor, and when used thoughtfully, it can have a safe place in your dog's routine.

Sources and References

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