Keep your pet safe this Christmas

’Tis the season to be jolly – and to decorate your home, eat a variety of festive foods and give gifts to your family members, including your pets. Murdoch University Vet Hospitals’s Dr Katrin Swindells has these bite-sized bits of advice to help you keep your pet safe and healthy this Christmas, and throughout the year.

Don’t change your pet’s diet.
It can be tempting to offer your pet, especially your dog, some of the foods we humans consider a special treat, but these foods can be toxic for pets and dogs often don’t cope well with sudden changes in diet. Danger foods for dogs include:
- Chocolate – the darker the chocolate the more toxic
- Macadamia nuts
- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Foods with the artificial sweetener Xylitol
- High fat foods – including fat trimmed from your cooked meat
- Onions, garlic, leeks – which are all often found in stuffing

Don’t give your dog ham bones or any cooked bones.
Unlike raw bones, cooked bones can splinter and are not easily digested – so they can lead to a range of serious health problems.

Keep any food-related presents away from your dog.
Your dog has a very powerful sense of smell – and could easily sniff out, rip open and eat any boxes of chocolates or other edible presents stored under your Christmas tree.

Don’t let your pet play with tinsel or other stringy toys or decorations.
Cats and kittens especially love to play with tinsel – but if they eat any, it can get caught in their intestines and cause major health problems and a need for emergency surgery.

If you give your pet a gift, make it a safe one.
Don’t give your pets anything that can fray, as it can form a string throughout their body if eaten. If you give your pet something that can be ripped, make sure it’s also something that can be digested so it doesn’t cause problems. Watch out for plastic toys with squeakers and other choking and digestive hazards. Don’t assume that because it’s sold in a pet shop it’s safe.

Keep your pet healthy this Christmas, and remember to leave plenty of fresh drinking water for them when you head out to visit friends and relatives. For more summer tips, find out how to [protect your dog from heatstroke](https://example.com/heatstroke) or [things to remember when you take your pets on holiday](https://example.com/pet-travel-tips).