

Phenol Toxicity in Pets

Background:

Phenol, a common ingredient found in cleaning products, is particularly toxic to pets and especially cats. Overexposure to phenol can cause neurological conditions, liver failure and even death.

Phenol is a corrosive organic compound, found in many household and industrial cleaners. Both its natural and synthetic form are toxic to mammals. Cats get phenol poisoning from ingesting phenol-based products, as well as through topical routes including the skin and nose. Phenol can build up to toxic levels, causing escalating symptoms.

Products That Contain Phenol:

Many household cleaners contain phenol, including well-known brands such as Lysol and PineSol. Labels on product that have “**Sol**” in their names, should be reviewed to determine if phenol is one of the ingredients. Advocates of essential oil based natural cleaners, that contain phenol, believe that these products are less toxic than their synthetic counterparts, but mammals and especially cats have a great difficulty processing phenol.

General Toxicity Information:

Phenols destroy protein cells. They are extremely corrosive and produce lesions that penetrate through layers of skin. These compounds are caustic to mucous membranes and can cause visible burns. Severe eye injury can occur and in lower doses, phenol compounds can cause upper respiratory distress. Birds, some reptiles and cats are more sensitive to phenols than are other species.

Best Practices:

Although phenol poisoning can be severe, there's limited data or consensus on its prevalence. Regardless, you can take simple precautions to lessen a pet's exposure to it.

Avoid using products containing phenol. If such products are used, the pets should be placed in a separate room during the cleaning process. Rinse whatever you're cleaning with water, dry it and ventilate the room before letting the pets back in. Safely store all cleaning products in a secure cabinet or area.



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