



Human Foods that are...

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Have you heard that you should not feed your dog potato chips or pizza? Does your veterinarian scold you for letting your pet gain too much weight?

The fact is, most people foods are actually bad for your pet's health.

Many pet owners are guilty of slipping "just a taste" of their own meal to that anxiously waiting companion. The look of longing in those deep eyes is more that some people can refuse.

We all know that most veterinarians forbid "people food," yet we continue to allow our animals scraps from our plates. By recommending that you deny it those tasty morsels, veterinarians are not trying to encourage you to be mean. The fact is, most people foods are actually bad for your animal's health.

Foods that we eat are often higher in fat and salt, or

sodium, than is safe for animals to eat, largely because animals' bodies are smaller than ours. Very small dogs can become quite ill from even small amounts of certain foods meant only for human consumption.

Foods containing large amounts of fat, such as meats, gravy, and fried foods, can cause severe gastrointestinal symptoms in animals, and even a disease called Pancreatitis. Pancreatitis can cause profuse vomiting and sometimes diarrhea, and may lead to expensive treatment and hospitalization for several days to a week.

Another problem with feeding animals' human food is that very few dogs will refuse it, even if they are full. They continue to take in excessive calories and fat, and as a result, may develop a weight problem. If your dog is overweight, it is important that you stop feeding it human food.

But what do you do if you just can't resist those begging eyes? There is actually a middle ground, though it is rarely mentioned. You can cut out the unhealthy people food and substitute something good for your pet that it likes just as well. The following is a list of some acceptable foods that you can try instead of that loaded hamburger. Have a small supply of some of these foods on hand when you feel like "sharing" a meal:

- Vegetables: carrots, baby carrots, broccoli, celery, squash, green beans, corn removed from the cob, and boiled or baked potatoes. Do not feed onions or any onion products to cats, because they can cause a toxic blood disease.
- Fruits: banana, apple, pear, and others. Most pets do not care for the citrus fruits. A recent study has found that grapes can lead to renal failure in dogs.

- Low-fat, low-salt, healthy breads or starches: plain rice cakes, plain popcorn, low salt crackers, shredded wheat cereal, cooked white rice, cooked pasta, and others.
- Meats: do not feed pets' lunch meats, hot dogs, sausage or pepperoni, or meat cooked with fat, skin, or spices. Bland meats like broiled skinless chicken breast or hamburger boiled in water to remove the fat can be used in small quantities.
- Avoid dairy: milk and cheeses can cause stomach upset or diarrhea in many animals.

It is best to feed pets' good quality commercial pet food, and limit treats to less than 10 percent of the total daily food intake.

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There are many pet treats on the market that are safer than most people foods. Remember to check the nutrient labels of these treats, since some contain large amounts of fats and thus should also be limited.