# Is Tea Toxic to Dogs? The Vet First Answer

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Is tea toxic to dogs, in summary:** Yes: caffeine and theobromine in tea are toxic to dogs. Dose and size decide severity, the bag adds a hazard, decaf is not safe. Call the vet, do not wait.

"Is tea toxic to dogs?" Yes, in the way that matters: the caffeine. This sits in the pets cluster beside can dogs drink tea.

*Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in April 2026.*

*General information, not veterinary advice. Individual animals vary; if yours may have taken in caffeine, or you cannot be sure, phone a vet or an animal poison helpline now.*

## Is tea toxic to dogs, at a glance

| Question | The answer |
|---|---|
| Toxic? | Yes, the issue is caffeine (and theobromine); dogs metabolise it poorly |
| Dose matters | A lick of weak milky tea vs a chewed teabag are very different; small dogs at higher risk |
| Teabag hazard | The bag itself is a gut-obstruction and concentrated-caffeine risk |
| Decaf | Not safe by default, reduced is not zero |
| Signs | Restlessness, racing heart, vomiting, tremors, call the vet, do not wait |

## What is toxic, and why dose matters

Tea contains caffeine and a small amount of theobromine, the same family of compounds that make chocolate dangerous to dogs, and dogs metabolise them far more slowly than people, so a quantity that is trivial for a human can be seriously harmful to a dog. Dose is the whole picture: a single lick of weak, milky, cooled tea from a large dog is a watch-and-see, while a small dog that has eaten a teabag, got into loose leaf, or drunk a strong fresh brew is a phone-the-vet-now situation, because both the dose per kilogram and the concentration matter, and small breeds, puppies and older dogs with reduced liver or kidney function are at markedly higher risk. Decaf is reduced, not eliminated, so it is not a safe default. The signs that mean act now are not subtle, restlessness, a racing or irregular heartbeat, vomiting, diarrhoea, tremors or any marked behaviour change, and the clear instruction is to contact a vet or an out-of-hours service immediately rather

than search for reassurance online.

### The teabag hazard, and prevention

The teabag deserves its own paragraph because it is the exposure people least expect and the worst-case household scenario. From a dog's point of view a dry teabag is a small parcel of concentrated caffeine wrapped in material it cannot digest: chewed and swallowed it delivers a higher dose per gram than brewed tea and adds the separate risk of a gut obstruction from the bag, string and tag. Loose leaf spilled is similar, concentrated and quick to ingest, and a bin or compost heap of used bags is a realistic route rather than a theoretical one, because the milk and sugar residue is attractive. Prevention is therefore the entire strategy: keep mugs, pots, loose leaf and the bag bin out of reach, clean spills, and treat anything sweetened as doubly dangerous, since xylitol in some sugar-free products is separately and rapidly toxic to dogs. See disposing of used bags.

### If your dog drinks tea

The question owners arrive with in a panic is "my dog drank some of my tea, what do I do?" Judge by size and dose: a single lick of weak milky tea from a large dog is usually a watch-and-see, but a small dog, a strong brew, a chewed bag or anything sweetened is a call-now, and acting early always beats waiting for symptoms. It helps the vet to know roughly how much, what form (brewed, leaf, bag, sweetened) and when. See my dog drank tea, what to do and the companion safe herbal teas for dogs.

### What to buy

Tea stays a human pleasure. For caffeine-free options people enjoy, browse the rooibos range or the wider herbal range, or the full tea shop; free UK delivery over £35.

**FROM THE CURATOR**

*teas* · Pick what you'll actually drink every day. A mug kept out of paw reach is worth more than one left on the floor.

### Pet-safety reading

- Safe herbal teas for dogs
- Household uses for tea
- Caffeine in tea
- Caffeine-free tea

### More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea

- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
- Loose leaf vs teabag


## Earn rewards on teas.co.uk

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

**+100 pts**

**Create your free account**

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



**100 pts = 1 tree**

**Plant a tree in Scotland**

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



teas.co.uk · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@teas.co.uk · 3-click cancel at teas.co.uk/cancel/