

Prevention of benzalkonium chloride exposure

- Store products securely out of sight and out of reach of pets and children.
- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- If required, dilute the product as instructed.
- Do not allow your cat to walk over a recently treated surface.
- Prevent access until the product is dry.
- If used outside try and restrict access if a recently treated surface becomes wet after rain.
- Always clean up spills promptly.
- If your cat comes into contact with the disinfectant, for example after a spillage or accidentally being sprayed, wash off immediately and contact your vet for advice.

ALTERNATIVES METHODS OF CLEANING

- If your cat regularly walks on kitchen surfaces it may be safer to use other methods of cleaning.
- Steam cleaning is a chemical-free alternative (depending on the surface to be cleaned).
- Alternatively, non-ionic or anionic detergents (such as diluted washing up liquid) can be used. These detergents are less irritant than cationic detergents.
- If disinfection is necessary, and steam cleaning not possible, then properly diluted bleach is an effective antibacterial agent.

What to do if you think your pet has been poisoned

EMERGENCY ADVICE

- Remove your pet from the source of poison.
- Do not try to make your pet vomit – NEVER give salt water.
- Contact your veterinary surgeon for advice - do not delay seeking advice even if your pet is well. Your vet will ask for details of what has happened.
- Collect the poison and take a sample with you if you are advised to take your pet to the practice.
- Remember to protect yourself and others.

Contact details for your vet:

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**VETERINARY POISONS
INFORMATION SERVICE**



POISONING IN PETS - FOCUS ON...

Benzalkonium chloride poisoning in cats



The Veterinary Poisons Information Service (VPIS) is a 24-hour telephone emergency service for veterinary professionals providing information on the management of actual and suspected poisoning in animals.



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What is benzalkonium chloride?

Many household disinfectants, such as antibacterial sprays and some patio cleaners, contain a compound called benzalkonium chloride which is a cationic detergent.

Cationic detergents are irritant and can cause adverse effects in cats that have licked or walked over treated surfaces.

Disinfectants can be harmful to cats and so should be used sensibly and only when necessary.

What are the signs of benzalkonium chloride poisoning?

Signs of benzalkonium chloride exposure often do not occur immediately and can be delayed by several hours.

Signs of benzalkonium chloride exposure include:

- Drooling
- A red and inflamed tongue with a painful mouth
- High body temperature
- Reduced appetite and/or drinking
- Redness and irritation of the skin
- Coughing and breathing difficulties

How is benzalkonium chloride poisoning treated?

- If your cat has been exposed to a product containing benzalkonium chloride – contact your vet immediately.
- If exposure was recent, wash the product off the skin and fur to prevent further ingestion.
- Treatment will involve drugs for pain relief and to control any drooling.
- Intravenous fluid therapy, particularly if your cat is not eating/drinking, may also be given.
- In severe cases syringe feeding may be required.

Outcome of benzalkonium chloride poisoning

Most cats recover fully from benzalkonium chloride exposure but it can take several days for the ulcers and inflammation in the mouth to heal fully.