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## Pearls for the Practitioner

### Topic: The Danger of Joint Supplement Overdoses

*The Animal Medical Center has created this e-mail publication to keep you informed about the latest practices in veterinary medicine and how these practices are being applied at The AMC. If you are interested in obtaining past issues of "Pearls for the Practitioner," please visit <http://www.amcny.org/vetpearls>.*

Many veterinarians frequently recommend glucosamine and chondroitin-containing supplements for pets with joint disease. These supplements are popular with veterinarians because they are safe and seem to induce a real improvement in the ability of some dogs and cats to rise from sitting and to walk more comfortably. These products are also popular with pet owners since they have been formulated into highly palatable "treats," simplifying administration.

In a March 1, 2010 "Letter to the Editor" in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medicine*, toxicologists at the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center report on 21 dogs who developed hepatic damage associated with overdosage of joint supplements. No single brand of joint supplement was associated with liver damage, and supplements contained other ingredients besides glucosamine and chondroitin. Dogs ate between 20 and 240 joint supplement tablets. Affected dogs developed vomiting and diarrhea within 30 minutes to 48 hours following ingestion of the tablets, and elevations in ALT and SAP were also identified. Follow-up was not available in all dogs, but of the nine with a known outcome, two were euthanized and seven recovered.

Because the cause of the hepatic damage is not known at this time, the toxicologists encourage aggressive management of joint supplement overdoses, including induction of vomiting and administration of activated charcoal if ingestion is recent. Blood should be submitted for analysis of hepatic enzymes and may need to be monitored for up to 48 hours after ingestion to detect abnormalities. Critically ill dogs may require intensive care, IV fluids and administration of hepatoprotective agents for an extended period of time.

The Critical Care and Emergency Service at The Animal Medical Center has doctors available 24 hours a day for your patients in need of critical care and/or emergency services. Veterinarians can reach us anytime at 212-329-8616. This is a dedicated line exclusively for referring veterinarians and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

To reach a Referral Coordinator, please call 212.329.8758/8890.