

Bird Safety Corner

Miscellaneous Household Hazards, Part 3

Medications are the **MOST DANGEROUS** thing in your house for your birds. Of the major sources of poisonings in companion birds reported to the Animal Poison Control Center, more than one third are due to medicines. Pills may be left for a moment on the counter while the human gets liquid to take them. Small objects like that are quickly snatched up by loose birds and can be deadly. If that happens, call either your avian vet or, if after hours, the **Animal Poison Control Center (888-4ANI-HELP)** IMMEDIATELY. The pill or capsule will need to be retrieved while still in the crop, for best results, though a certain amount of the medication may still be absorbed. You **MUST** get immediate veterinary help! Also keep in mind that while **pill bottles** may be childproof, they are NOT bird proof. Large birds can easily break or crush a pill bottle and get at the contents, so it is not safe to leave any kind of pill container out where a bird can get it. Remember that anything you handle will naturally be of interest to your bird, especially something that rattles when picked up. And there isn't a pill bottle in existence that can't have its top removed by a determined cockatoo! Remember that vitamins and other supplements are also medications and can be toxic, as can be other forms of medication, such as inhalers.



Styptic powder is an astringent that causes blood vessels to contract to seal them off when bleeding. It is composed of anhydrous aluminum sulfate, potassium alum, and/or titanium dioxide. It used to be quite common in the days before safety razors, but is now primarily used in veterinary practice to stop bleeding from nails which are cut too closely. While it is quite effective when a bleeding toenail is dipped in the powder, it is toxic to ingest. Since birds groom their nails, it is possible that small amounts could be ingested, so care must be taken that very little is applied. Safe alternatives to styptic powder include **corn starch** and **flour**. Pure **aloe vera** will also stop bleeding, both on its own and mixed with cornstarch, and has added benefits of antibacterial properties and pain relief. Styptic powder should never be applied directly to a skin wound.

Denture cleaners come in cream, liquid, powder, and tablet form, and may be effervescent or not. There are also mechanical cleaners, but those will not be addressed here. One of the most common ingredients found in tablet denture cleaners is **sodium perborate**, which can cause direct irritation, salivation, lacrimation (tears), vomiting, and central nervous system depression. Other homemade solutions, such as



peroxide, baking soda and vinegar, and **bleach**, are also toxic to birds. So if you use denture cleaners, make sure that your bird cannot dip its little beak into whatever solution you use.



Scented toilet paper, paper towels, and **tissues** use various **fragrances** and other chemicals which could be potentially harmful to your bird. Hypoallergenic products are best to have to use anywhere where a bird might have access.

Cardboard is a great toy for birds, as we all know, especially corrugated cardboard. Be aware that there may be **coatings** on the cardboard, however, or cardboard may have been sprayed with **chemicals** to retard growth of bacteria and fungus. Washing cardboard might remove surface contamination, though it isn't foolproof.

Amy Hopkins, [The Parrot Club](#), © 2012. All rights reserved