



Why Does My Dog Eat Gross Stuff — and Should I Be Worried?



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Sometimes dogs will look at a lawn or a dog park and see a big, tasty buffet: dirt, grass, poop and who knows what else? Dogs eating odd nonfood items is a relatively common behavior; the condition even has a name: pica. But you keep your pooch well-fed with plenty of tasty, nutritional food, so why would they choose to chow down on such nasty stuff? Is it harmful? Should you be worried?

We've got some insights into pica for you to chew on ...



Why Does My Dog Eat Grass?

It's very common for dogs to enjoy a nice lawn salad — the behavior has even been observed in wild dogs. While they may do this for several reasons, most vets agree it's a normal behavior.^{1,2}

Some dogs may throw up after eating grass, but evidence suggests that they aren't chowing down on grass to make themselves vomit.¹ However, if your dog is constantly eating grass and throwing up, you should consult your vet.

In the end, dogs may just like the way grass tastes and feels when they chew it. Better grass than your slippers, right? Just make sure the grass hasn't been treated with chemicals, and keep any toxic plants well out of reach.

Why Does My Dog Eat Poop?

Number two on our list of odd things dogs like to eat is poop — either their own or other animals'. This behavior is known as coprophagia. Experts point to several reasons dogs might eat poop, ranging from anxiety and seeking attention to being kept in a small space for too long.³

It's definitely gross, but is it harmful? It's nothing to get too alarmed about, though frequent poop snacks increase your dog's risk of ingesting harmful pathogens and parasites. So if you can prevent it, you should.

Why Does My Dog Eat Dirt?

They love digging in it and rolling in it, and yes, it's even common for some dogs to eat dirt. If your dog does it occasionally, they could be bored or they might have found a tasty patch of dirt where hamburger juice dripped off the grill. If they're continuously noshing on mud pies, it may indicate a more serious issue, such as anemia or an upset stomach. Check with your vet to be sure.⁴

It's usually not a serious issue if they do it once in a while, but regular dirt dining can also put them at risk for soil-dwelling parasites, pesticide exposure, choking or damage to their teeth or digestive tract from ingesting sticks or rocks.

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How to Keep Your Dog from Becoming a Gross Gourmet

Here are several ways you can encourage your dog to stick to eating what's in their bowl instead of turning the outdoors into their smorgasbord:

- Keep an eye on frequency:

If your dog exhibits occasional pica, it's usually not cause for alarm. If you notice them doing it more frequently, you should consult your vet.

- Keep them active:

Dogs may take to eating weird stuff out of boredom, a lack of stimulation or to get your attention. Their world revolves around you, after all, so bust out their favorite toy, head to the park or give them extra cuddles. Or all three.

- Feed them a healthy diet:

Giving your dog nutritious meals in the right amounts can help reduce the chance they'll feel the need to supplement their diet with something that isn't food.

- Give them an alternative:

Use a tasty treat, like [GREENIES™ dental treats](#), once a day as a reward to reinforce positive behavior or to help satisfy their urge to chew. As a bonus, these mouth-wowing chews help promote your dog's oral health and help keep their breath kissably fresh.

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