FOOD & PLANTS

Is Pothos Toxic to Cats? Signs and What to Do

Yes. Pothos (devil's ivy) is toxic to cats and no variety is cat safe: chewing it burns the mouth and can cause drooling, vomiting and trouble swallowing. Most animals recover fully, but a swollen throat is an emergency.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed October 30, 2026 • 6 min read • 7 cited sources

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The short answer

Yes, pothos is toxic to cats. The ASPCA lists pothos (Epipremnum aureum), also sold as golden pothos, devil's ivy, taro vine and ivy arum, as toxic to cats and dogs. It holds insoluble calcium oxalates, crystals released when a cat bites in: chewing it burns the mouth and can cause drooling and vomiting.

So pothos is not safe for cats, and no pothos counts as cat safe. Merck's veterinary manual calls the entire plant poisonous, and the ASPCA names the whole Epipremnum group among the most common oxalate plants its poison center gets calls about.

It is rarely a crisis. The ASPCA rates the severity as low and expects no long-term effects, and Merck expects most animals to recover fully. The exception is a swollen throat: rare, but it can make breathing hard, and that is an emergency.

Why pothos hurts a cat's mouth

Pothos protects itself with raphides: tiny, needle-like crystals bundled in cells scattered through the plant (Merck). When a cat chews or crushes a leaf or stem, those cells release the needles into whatever they touch, which means the lips, mouth and throat (Merck, Pet Poison Helpline).

The pain comes at once. Merck describes intense pain in the mouth on chewing any part of the plant, fading slowly even without treatment. Writing about dumbcane, which holds the same crystals, Merck notes that the immediate pain limits how much a pet eats.

A single bite does not threaten the kidneys: unlike soluble oxalates, the insoluble kind is no concern for kidney injury (Merck). Regular nibbling is another matter. A 2023 review in the journal Toxins warns that oxalates eaten over a long time can damage the kidneys and urinary tract.

Which pothos plants are toxic

All of them, as far as a cat owner needs to know. Golden, neon and marble pothos all belong to Epipremnum, the group the ASPCA names, and the Toxins review shows the neon kind holding the same crystals.

Satin pothos looks similar but is a different plant, Scindapsus pictus. The ASPCA lists it as toxic to cats too, for the same insoluble calcium oxalates.

Signs to watch for

POTHOS SIGNS, FROM COMMON TO RARE

Sign	How often	What to do
Heavy drooling	Common	Call your vet or a poison line
Gagging or vomiting	Common	Call your vet or a poison line
Pawing at the mouth, shaking the head	Can happen	Call your vet or a poison line
Red or swollen lips, tongue or gums	Can happen	Call your vet or a poison line
Not eating, tiredness, diarrhea	Can happen	Call your vet or a poison line
Trouble swallowing	Can happen	Go to a vet hospital now
Trouble breathing, from a swollen throat	Rare	Emergency: go to a vet hospital now

From the ASPCA, Merck and Pet Poison Helpline. Signs can start as soon as the cat bites the plant.

This quick sheet is the start of the guide. Still to read: If your cat chewed pothos, Easing the mouth, and what the vet may do, Keeping pothos and a cat apart and 3 more sections, plus the Toxic & Safe Houseplants for Cats Chart. Read it all free when you join our pet health emails at cattcountycatnippers.org/articles/is-pothos-toxic-to-cats

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