



AIRBORNE TOXINS AND BIRDS

People with birds need to be careful with their feathered pets around airborne toxins. One of the most common toxicities occurs with exposure to non-stick cookware. The Teflon coating in non-stick pans and pots emits polytetrafluoroethylene gas (PTFE) when overheated or burned. This gas is not toxic to humans, but is deadly to our pet birds. PTFE is emitted from nonstick bakeware, drip pans, irons, ironing board covers and some heat lamps. The lungs are the target organs for the gas. Most of the time sudden death occurs. Birds also can show respiratory distress, wheezing, incoordination, weakness and convulsions. There is hemorrhage and congestion of the lungs because of the inhalation of the acidic gasses. Birds need oxygen and bronchodilators and supportive care to try and pull them through Teflon toxicity. Unfortunately many birds do not recover.

Tobacco smoke inhalation can lead to chronic eye, skin and respiratory disease in our pet birds. If birds accidentally ingest tobacco products, they can exhibit hyperexcitability, vomiting, diarrhea, seizures and death. To keep your bird safe, it is recommended to keep them in a well ventilated, smoke free area away from tobacco products. It is also recommended that smokers wash their hands before handling their birds. The nicotine on contact can cause skin irritations that can lead to secondary bacterial infections.

Disinfectants and cleaning products can emit harsh chemical smells that can be irritating to bird air sac and lungs. These irritants can lead to inflammation and damage to the lungs and make them more susceptible to secondary infections. When cleaning, move your birds to a well ventilated area away from the chemical smells. Make sure to rinse cages and bowls thoroughly after cleaning with any disinfectants or bleach solutions. Direct contact with cleaning products should be avoided.

If you have any questions or concerns about possible airborne toxins and your pet bird, be sure to consult us!

Dr. Katie Racek-Peters