



# ASSOCIATION OF SUGAR GLIDER VETERINARIANS™

## **Household Hazards that can Kill your Sugar Glider**

Hi, my name is Dr. David Brust, and I've been a practicing exotic veterinarian for the last 25 years. I'm the author of "*Sugar Gliders: A Complete Veterinary Care Guide*" – and I'm also the president of the Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians.

The purpose of this video series is to cut through all the internet misinformation out there, and teach owners like you the best - veterinary-approved - ways to raise and care for sugar gliders.

Now, just to make sure we're all on the same page here, sugar gliders are also commonly known as "sugar bears" and "honey gliders" – and with that in mind, the goal of this video is to give you a heads up about some of the most common things around the house that can harm or kill these little guys.

Just like having any other pet, there are a few "not so obvious" things you need to pay attention to if you're going to have sugar gliders in your home.

For example, the most common cause of accidental sugar glider death around the house is actually drowning in an open toilet bowl. The reason they're called sugar "gliders" and not "swimmers" is because they can't swim – not even a little – and will drown almost instantly if they ever fall into a pool of liquid. Other common sources of drowning are things like: sinks, bathtubs, buckets, swimming pools, and even open pots of liquid on countertops, so just make sure to keep the doors closed and put lids on everything before you let your gliders out to play each day.

Another common cause of injury or death for these little guys is toxicity poisoning. Sugar gliders have a great sense of smell and a very curious personality, so they will automatically be drawn to anything that smells sweet – like air fresheners and candles – or cleaners that have a citrus-smell to them.

Insect and rodent baits are also a big no-no when it comes to sugar gliders – as are pesticides sprayed either on foods or around the house. Always make sure to wash all their fruits/veggies carefully – and take their cage either to another room (or preferably to another house) for a day or two if you are going to have the house sprayed for bugs. Also, remember, insects are a natural food for sugar gliders, so always make sure to clean up any dead bugs around the house that might have been killed by pesticides.

Probably, the two most common sources of toxicity poisoning in sugar gliders are from things they lick off their owner hands – or drinking tap water. Again, sugar gliders have a great sense of smell, and when they find something new, they usually give it a quick

**For more information, go to: [www.ASGV.org](http://www.ASGV.org)**

© 2009 The Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians. All Rights Reserved

“taste” to see if it’s food. That includes almost anything that gets on your hands during the normal course of a day, like gasoline, cleaners, sprays, and things like that. Bug spray is especially important, because many times your gliders will run around directly on your skin, and can then accidentally lick it into their system while grooming themselves later on.

Fortunately, the best way to avoid these kinds of problems is just to always wash your hands very thoroughly - using normal hand or dish soap - before you pick up your gliders; and also make sure to clean beneath your nails.

Now, we cover the dangers of tap water more in another video on drinking, but just quickly, spikes in chemicals that are commonly found in tap water - like chlorine and fluoride – can cause sudden death in sugar gliders. Therefore, always use either bottled drinking or spring water and you’ll be fine.

Probably one of the least obvious ways a sugar glider can get poisoned is from accidentally spraying cleaners around their food or water. For example, lots of people keep a bowl of fruit out on the kitchen counter, and then spray cleaner all around the bowl every day to clean up. Well, the best way to avoid these kinds of accidents is to always wash their fruits & veggies right before feeding time - and keep their supply of pellet food sealed in a plastic container.

Two other important things to keep in mind are that sugar gliders can never have chocolate – and to keep your gliders out of the kitchen while you are cooking. Some non-stick cookware can give off fumes that are toxic to small animals like birds and gliders, and overall there are just too many hot things in a kitchen that can accidentally burn a sugar glider – like stovetops, toasters, coffee pots, light bulbs, and hot pots & pans.

By the way, I personally love to cook a lot, so I’ve had to train myself to check all my pockets before I start every meal. Since I usually have at least one of my little guys with me all the time, I sometimes forget they’re even there – but it only takes one little mistake – so I never risk it. The combination of all the hot things – and yummy smells – is just too tempting for me to ever take a chance with one of my little buddies.

Now, we can’t cover every possible household hazard in a video like this, but these are the biggies. If you take a few minutes to “glider-proof” your home like we’ve just discussed, and use common sense, you’ll be just fine.☺

**For more information, go to: [www.ASGV.org](http://www.ASGV.org)**

© 2009 The Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians. All Rights Reserved