

# ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS TO AVOID IN THE HOME AND OUTSIDE

It's not that parrots are like hothouse flowers or so delicate that they must be treated like invalids. But it is true that birds, including parrots, have highly specialized body systems – especially respiration (breathing/inhale and exhale, lung power) and digestion (swallowing, absorption, waste disposal). Many items inside and outside our homes can trigger toxic and even fatal reactions.

When bringing a parrot into the family setting, it is vital to research hazards to avians that produce no similar response in humans. Think cleaning products, cooking equipment, household chemicals, and plants that give off fumes, that can be accidentally ingested, and are simply too close to the parrot's immediate environment. What we can handle in a room is nowhere the same for a bird whose natural habitat is outside in the open air.

Take your parrot immediately to the avian vet specialist if you see your parrot showing any external signs of distress such as: breathing difficulties, discolored feathers/skin, irritated eyes, lack of appetite, lethargy/weakness, nausea/vomiting, seizures, suddenly uncoordinated, unusual tail feather bobbing.



Pots and pans – Fumes from non-stick cookware can be deadly. The dangerous coating is PTFE, commonly known as teflon, which can also be found in carpeting, fabrics in clothing and furniture, hair dryers, heaters, irons, lightbulbs, mattresses, ovens, and even pet toys. When heated above 300 degrees F, it releases six different fatal fumes.



Aerosol spray, air fresheners with fragrances, bug sprays, gasoline, mothballs – All can contain dangerous compounds. If you must use these products, move your parrot to another well-ventilated room.



Air quality – In situations of external weather or environmental disasters, dust, smoke, and other kinds of pollution carried by fire or wind can affect your bird. Close all windows and doors. Use air-conditioning or air purifiers indoors so the internal air is as clean as possible





Cleaning products – Even so-called non-toxic products may be okay for humans but not for birds. Not only can your parrot inhale dangerous chemicals, but your bird may also peck at surfaces cleaned by or sprayed with these products such as ammonia, bleach, chlorine, detergents, disinfectants, floor cleaners, insecticides, paints, paint removers, rat poisons window cleaners. If you can't rely 100% on safe cleaning agents such as baking soda and white vinegar, make sure to keep all items far away from your avian companions and don't use them on anything your parrot goes on or near to.



Heavy metals – Birds can be easily poisoned by brass, copper, lead-based paints, lead ammunition, certain wires, and zinc. Always check the source and ingredients of paint, even what is used on bird cages and bird toys. Most paint removers are also very toxic (you have to wear gloves to handle it properly!). Make sure your parrot's cage has no flaking paint or rust. Items that don't bother humans but are dangerous to birds include aluminum foil, ammunition, ball bearings, batteries, candy wrappers, caulk, ceramics, drapery and fishing weights, jewelry, inks, leaded glass, non-USA-made metal cages, paints, plastics, pop-top cans, solder, and wire toys.



Plants – Most toxic include amaryllis, azalea, begonia, elephant ear, ivies, fertilizers containing lead or zinc, holly, all lilies, mistletoe, mushrooms, rhododendrons. Also dangerous are flowers grown from bulbs, many seeds from flowers, many tree saps, many types of vines, most flowers! In general, our native plants are not the same as ones found in lands that parrot species are native to.



Smoke from candles, fire, marijuana, and tobacco – Fumes inhaled are particularly harmful. Wood can release benzene, carbon monoxide, and formaldehyde. Never handle a bird if you have just finished smoking because smoking residue on clothes or your hands will affect your parrot.

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center is a resource every pet parent should know about. You can call **1-888-426-4435** any hour of the day or night including weekends and holidays.