

Antihistamines

- Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.
- Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.
- This medicine has been prescribed for your pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.

This leaflet applies to a range of drugs called antihistamines. These drugs include chlorphenamine, hydroxyzine, fexofenadine, cetirizine and loratadine. They are sold under a variety of trade names.

What are antihistamines?

Antihistamines bind to histamine receptors (H1) on the blood vessels in the skin to prevent histamine binding to the receptor. This helps block an allergic reaction.

Why has my pet been prescribed antihistamines?

Your pet may be suffering from allergies or may have been diagnosed with a mast cell tumour. In both of these cases, histamine release can result in itching, hives and, rarely, anaphylaxis.

How should I store antihistamines?

Antihistamines should be stored in their original packaging at room temperature. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

How do I give antihistamines to my pet?

Antihistamines are usually administered by mouth although, occasionally, antihistamine eye drops may be prescribed. It is important to administer these drugs regularly as prescribed and not on an 'as needed' basis.

How long will my pet need to take antihistamines?

Your pet may need to take antihistamines during the 'allergy season' or as otherwise recommended by your vet.

What should I do if I run out of medicine?

Contact your vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

It is not critical if a dose is missed, and the treatment regime should be continued at the next scheduled dosing time. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the total stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

Contact your vet immediately if your pet receives an overdose.

Can my pet take antihistamines if I am already giving them other drugs?

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications. This includes herbal or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop, pharmacy or health store. Antihistamines are generally safe to give with other medicines but your vet will advise you regarding any potential drug reactions.

What are the possible side effects of antihistamines for my pet?

Antihistamines are generally well tolerated. They may cause sedation in some cases and, rarely, hyperexcitability. Care should be taken in pets with pre-existing seizures, glaucoma and problems with urine retention.

What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking antihistamines?

The treatment should be stopped and you should contact your vet as soon as possible.

What should I do if a person accidentally takes this drug?

If a person accidentally takes the medication, they should contact their doctor as soon as possible.

Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about this drug or concerns about your pet's health, contact your vet. They will know your pet's medical history and can provide further information about antihistamines.

The Prescribing Cascade

This medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

While the editors and the BSAVA have made every effort in preparing this information leaflet, the contents and any statements are made in good faith purely for general guidance and cannot be regarded as substitute for professional advice. The publishers, contributors and the BSAVA do not take responsibility for the information provided on this leaflet and hence do not accept any liability for loss or expense incurred (by you or persons that you disseminate the materials to) as a result of relying on content in this leaflet. To this end, you are advised to consult your vet and seek their professional advice before taking any steps set out in this leaflet. If you are a vet, you must not rely on the contents in this leaflet without independently verifying the correctness and veracity of the contents. BSAVA is not responsible for any alterations made to this document from the version supplied.