

# Buprenorphine

- 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.

The medicine you have been given for your dog or cat is called buprenorphine. It may have a trade name such as Buprecare, Buprenodale or Vetergesic, but often will just be called buprenorphine.

## What is buprenorphine?

Buprenorphine is a pain medication belonging to the opioid family; other known opioids are morphine, tramadol and methadone. Buprenorphine provides mild to moderate pain relief for sustained periods of usually 6–8 hours. Buprenorphine is a Controlled Drug and is subject to certain legal requirements; your vet will explain this to you.

## Why has my pet been prescribed buprenorphine?

Your pet has been prescribed buprenorphine to provide pain relief that is stronger than usual home-dispensed medication (for example, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs). It is typically given as a short course following surgery.

## How should I store buprenorphine?

Buprenorphine should be stored at room temperature and away from light. Buprenorphine should be stored away from other medications in the home in case of confusion. **This medication must be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

## How do I give buprenorphine to my pet?

Buprenorphine is given by the mouth. It is not eaten but put under your pet's tongue as a 'sublingual dose'. Each dose should have been calculated for you by your vet and be ready for administration in a syringe. To administer the dose, you should lift your pet's lip on one side and gently slide the open end of the syringe under their tongue. This can be tricky in practice and may not be tolerated by your pet. If this method is not possible, squirting the dose into the inside of the cheek can provide some effect. If you have any difficulties, contact your vet for assistance and advice.

## How long will my pet need to take buprenorphine?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients. If your pet is unwell during the course of treatment then you should contact your vet as soon as possible.

## What should I do if I run out of buprenorphine?

Your vet will have dispensed a specific treatment dose for a set duration for your pet. However, if you do run out or accidentally spill some of the medication, contact your vet in case more is to be dispensed.

## What should I do if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose, give the medication as soon as possible. However, it is best to skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your pet's next scheduled dose. **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 of buprenorphine.

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

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications, even if you think they already know. This includes herbal or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop, pharmacy or health store.

## What are the possible side effects of buprenorphine for my pet?

The oral administration of buprenorphine can cause your pet to drool, feel nauseous or vomit as the solution can taste bitter. You may notice your pet pant, be restless and appear disorientated, have dilated pupils or even be more sleepy and sedated. If you are concerned by your pet's reaction to the medication, please contact your vet immediately.

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

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, stop the treatment and contact your vet as soon as possible.

### 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.

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

If a person accidentally takes your pet's medicine they should contact their doctor **immediately**. This leaflet along with any remaining medication and its container (even if it is empty) should be taken with them.

### **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 own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and further information on buprenorphine.