

Oral medication

- 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, in tablet or liquid form, that are given orally. They include preparations that contain a range of active ingredients for your pet's medical condition. Some preparations contain more than one drug. Oral medications are sold under a variety of trade names.

How do I give oral medication to my pet?

Oral medication is not painful but your pet may initially find the process of receiving oral or liquid medication, when not provided in food, unpleasant. Try to administer the medication around other normal activities that your pet enjoys. It is important to reinforce your pet's good behaviour with lots of praise. If at first your pet does not cooperate, be patient and try again a few minutes later. Even nervous pets will usually get used to the procedure. Speak to your vet if you encounter ongoing difficulties with administration.

Tablets or capsules

To aid with administration, it may be useful to disguise the medication on or within food. Wrapping the medication in something tasty, such as wet food or ham, may help. Check with your vet that it is ok to give the medication with food and use foods that you know your pet can tolerate. Commercial products, both for dogs and cats, are also available to help disguise the taste. In cases where a tablet or capsule needs to be given directly into the mouth, you can follow the steps below:

- Ensure your hands are clean before administering medication.
- Hold your pet's head from the top with your non-dominant hand and hold the tablet or capsule between the thumb and forefinger of your dominant hand.
- Tilt your pet's head back and use the middle finger of your dominant hand to gently pull down their lower jaw. A cat's mouth will automatically open when its head is tilted back.



- Place the tablet or capsule as far back on the tongue as you can.
- Hold the mouth closed and stroke your pet's throat to encourage swallowing.
- **Some tablets or capsules can cause ulcers if they stick in the throat. A syringe of water or small amount of food should be given immediately after administration to aid passage into the stomach.**
- For pets who may bite, pilling devices that make it easier to administer tablets to the back of the tongue without inserting fingers into the mouth are available.

Liquids

To aid with administration, it may be useful to disguise the medication on or within food. Squirting the liquid on to something tasty, such as wet food, may help. However, in cases where a liquid needs to be given directly into the mouth, you can follow the steps below:

- Ensure your hands are clean before administering medication.
- Fill a syringe with the required amount of liquid.
- Liquid medications are administered into a pouch between the cheek and teeth. With your pet's mouth closed, use the thumb of your non-dominant hand to gently pull back the side of the mouth.
- Using your dominant hand, squirt the medication into the pouch that is formed between the cheek and teeth.
- Hold your pet's mouth closed and massage the neck to encourage swallowing.
- Liquids are more likely to accidentally enter the windpipe compared with tablets or capsules. To avoid your pet inhaling liquid into the windpipe, do not tilt the head backward.



The Prescribing Cascade

Some oral medications are authorized for use in dogs/cats/pets. However, on occasion, your veterinary surgeon will need to prescribe a medicine not authorized in veterinary species. In these cases, the medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is being 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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Powders

Occasionally, medication may be in the form of a powder. Powdered medication should be mixed into wet, tasty food to hide the taste. Strong-smelling foods will help mask the smell of the medication.

Why has my pet been prescribed oral medication?

Your vet may have been prescribed oral medication for many different conditions. Your vet will explain the reason that the medication has been prescribed, as well as the frequency and duration the medication needs to be given.

How should I store oral medication?

Some oral medications have no specific storage instructions. Other medications, particularly liquids, may have special storage instructions such as requiring refrigeration. Please read the leaflet for each medication that has been dispensed for your pet carefully and follow the storage advice. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children**. Return any unused or leftover medication to your vet practice for safe disposal.

How long will my pet require oral medication?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between animals. It is important that you complete the course of treatment even if your pet seems to be well. If your pet is still unwell at the end of the course, then you should contact your vet as soon as possible.

What should I do if I run out of oral medication?

Try not to run out of treatment. Make sure you order more from your vet if your supply is getting low. If you do run out, contact your own vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If a dose is missed, 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 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 is given an overdose of oral medication. For some medications, a single extra dose may be unlikely to cause significant problems. For other medications, an extra dose may be more serious.

Can my pet receive oral medication 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 oral medication for my pet?

If your pet shows any unusual symptoms whilst taking oral medication, please contact your vet. All medications have the ability to cause side effects and any side effects depend on the dose, the length of treatment and the individual.

Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about an oral medication, or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about the specific medicine.