



Medicine series

Practice details

Propranolol

- 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 propranolol. It may have a trade name such as Syprol®, but often will just be called propranolol.

What is propranolol?

Propranolol belongs to a group of medicines that are called beta-adrenoceptor blockers or beta-blockers. These drugs slow down the heartbeat and reduce the amount of work being done by the heart's muscles. As a result, beta-blockers will help reduce high blood pressure (hypertension).

Why has my pet been prescribed propranolol?

Propranolol is used in dogs and cats to treat cardiac arrhythmias (abnormal heartbeats), and in a condition called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, where the heart becomes abnormally enlarged. Propranolol can also be used where there is an obstruction to normal blood flow within the heart itself. Propranolol is sometimes used in combination with other drugs to reduce abnormally high blood pressure associated with tumours of the adrenal glands (phaeochromocytomas). In cats with hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid gland and excess production of thyroid hormone), propranolol may be given before surgery to stabilize the heart rate. In addition, propranolol can be used to help treat anxiety-related behavioural problems, often in combination with other medication and behavioural therapy.

How should I store propranolol?

This medicine does not require special storage conditions. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

How do I give propranolol tablets or oral solution to my pet?

Try to disguise propranolol in a small quantity of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Alternatively, it can be placed carefully on the back of your pet's tongue and their mouth held closed until the entire dose has been swallowed.

How long will my pet need to take propranolol?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients.

What should I do if I run out of propranolol?

Try not to run out. Make sure you order more propranolol from your vet if your supply is getting low. If your pet has been receiving propranolol for a long time, **do not suddenly stop giving it**; ideally, the dose should be gradually reduced. 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, just give the next dose at the normal 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 is given an overdose of propranolol. In people an overdose can cause dangerously low blood pressure and a slow heart rate, which can potentially be fatal.

Can my pet take propranolol 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. Do not give propranolol to your pet if they are already taking any of a group of drugs called sympathomimetics (these include phenylpropanolamine, used to treat urinary incontinence). Great care is needed if propranolol is given to patients already taking any of a group of sedatives called phenothiazines, diazepam (used to reduce anxiety and help control fits), diuretics (used in heart conditions) or other drugs that reduce blood pressure or treat irregular heartbeats. In general, propranolol should not be given if the patient is already taking digoxin or calcium channel blockers (both used in heart conditions), cimetidine or aluminium hydroxide (used to treat stomach ulcers), or theophylline (used in respiratory disease). Propranolol may enhance the effects of insulin, so diabetic patients require careful monitoring if they are taking propranolol. If you have any concerns about using propranolol with other medications, please ask your vet for further advice.

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

Propranolol can cause low blood pressure and an excessively slow heart rate, leading to generalized weakness and fainting, as well as diarrhoea. It may cause bronchospasm (spasm of the small airways in the lungs), resulting in coughing and difficulty breathing. Rarely, depression and lethargy may also be seen. Propranolol can make pre-existing kidney problems worse. If your pet shows any unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet.

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 my pet is unwell while taking propranolol?

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, contact your vet as soon as possible for advice. **Do not suddenly stop giving propranolol;** the medication needs to be slowly reduced over time before being stopped altogether.

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

If a person accidentally takes your pet's medicine, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and any remaining medicine plus the container (even if it is empty) with you.

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 will know about propranolol.