



Medicine series

Practice details

Sulfasalazine

- 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 sulfasalazine. It may have a trade name such as Salazopyrin®, but often will just be called sulfasalazine (or sulphasalazine).

What is sulfasalazine?

Sulfasalazine belongs to a group of medicines that are called aminosalicylates. After being taken by mouth, these drugs are broken down by normal bacteria living in the colon (the lower part of the bowel). The fragments of drug released after breakdown reduce inflammation of the colon.

Why has my pet been prescribed sulfasalazine?

Sulfasalazine is used to help treat colitis. Colitis is a condition where the large bowel becomes inflamed, resulting in diarrhoea that often contains fresh blood and mucus.

How should I store sulfasalazine?

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 sulfasalazine tablets to my pet?

DO NOT crush or break sulfasalazine tablets but give them whole. The tablets have a special coating to protect the stomach, and breaking the pill could damage this coating. Try to disguise them in a small quantity of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Alternatively, they 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 sulfasalazine?

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 tablets?

If you run out of sulfasalazine, contact your vet the next working day and ask them what they want you to do. It may be that your vet has prescribed a course that has now come to an end as your pet does not need the treatment any more. It may be that your vet needs to examine your pet before more treatment is prescribed. Remember to take any empty containers with you when you go to see your vet.

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 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 an overdose is given. There is limited information available about overdoses in pets. However, in people an overdose of sulfasalazine can cause vomiting, stomach pain, drowsiness or fits.

Can my pet take sulfasalazine 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 sulfasalazine to your pet if they are already taking digoxin (used in some heart conditions).

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

The level of thyroxine (a hormone produced by the thyroid gland) in your pet's blood may need to be checked during treatment with sulfasalazine, as the drug can significantly lower it. Side effects are uncommon but can include a condition called dry eye (keratoconjunctivitis sicca), where there is inadequate tear production and the surface of the eye (the cornea) becomes very inflamed and sore. The vet will measure your pet's tear production periodically whilst they are taking sulfasalazine. If your pet shows *any* unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet.

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

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you should not give any further doses and should contact your vet as soon as possible for advice.

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.

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

If a person accidentally takes your pet's tablets, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and any remaining tablets plus their 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 sulfasalazine.