

Antibacterials (antibiotics)

- 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 antibacterials (which are also known as antibiotics). These drugs include penicillins (such as clavulanate potentiated amoxicillin), sulphonamides, cephalosporins, fluoroquinolones and various others. They are sold under a wide variety of trade names. This leaflet does not apply to antifungal or antiviral drugs, or antibacterials that are applied to the eyes, ears or skin as creams or ointments.

What are antibacterials?

Antibacterials are used to treat bacterial infections. They either kill bacteria or stop them growing in a number of different ways. Antibacterials do not affect viruses or fungi; these infections will not respond to antibacterials. Not all bacterial infections need to be treated with antibacterials; draining abscesses, cleaning wounds and topical antiseptics can be used instead.

What is antibacterial resistance?

Bacteria can become resistant to antibacterials, which makes these medicines useless. It is important to prevent antibacterial resistance developing, since using an ineffective drug to treat an infection could have adverse effects on your pet's health. Your vet has given you this leaflet in an effort to reduce the risk of resistant bacteria developing. Please follow the instructions carefully.

Why has my pet been prescribed antibacterials?

Antibacterials can be prescribed for many different conditions. The most common conditions that require such drugs include skin, intestine, wound and urinary system infections. In many cases, your vet will have selected a particular antibacterial on the basis of the Antibacterial Prescribing Policy (sometimes called the PROTECT ME policy). Your vet may have selected the antibacterial on the basis of results from laboratory tests. It is important to realize that it may take several days before the effects of the antibacterials are seen, and that you should continue to give the drug to your pet for some time after the signs of infection have disappeared.

How should I store antibacterials?

Antibacterials do not require special storage conditions. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children**. Any unused antibacterials should be returned to your vet for safe disposal. Do not dispose of tablets down the toilet or in household waste.

How do I give antibacterial tablets to my pet?

Antibacterials usually work better when given with food. 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. A few antibacterials are best given on an empty stomach. Your vet will tell you if this is the case.

How long will my pet need to take antibacterials?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients. **It is important that you complete the course of antibacterials**. If your pet is still unwell at the end of the course, then you should see your vet as soon as possible.

What should I do if I run out of tablets?

Check with your vet if your supply is getting low to see if the treatment needs to be continued. If you run out during the prescribed course, 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 receives an overdose of antibacterials. However, a single extra dose is unlikely to cause any significant problems.

Can my pet take antibacterials 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.

The Prescribing Cascade

Many antibacterials 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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What are the possible side effects of antibacterials for my pet?

Antibacterials cause a range of side effects that depend on the dose, length of treatment and individual. These side effects will stop as the antibacterials are withdrawn. The most common signs include diarrhoea and vomiting. Rare side effects include skin reactions and lethargy. 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 antibacterials?

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you should contact your vet as soon as possible for advice.

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 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 antibacterials.