



Pet Prescriptions

Your animal's health always comes first

Your veterinarian will honor your request to have your pet's prescriptions filled at a traditional community or online pharmacy. As your veterinarian's primary concern is the safety and wellness of your pet, it is essential to ensure that the communication between the veterinarian, pharmacist, and pet owner is thorough.

Your veterinarian has extensive education in animal medications and is best qualified to prescribe the correct medication for your pet in the right form at the appropriate dosage. Pharmacists are extensively educated in human medication, but most do not have specialized training in the difference between human and animal pharmacology. There are important differences between pets and people in terms of dosages, potential adverse reactions, and reasons for use of various medications. It is important that your veterinarian is involved in all decisions regarding your pet's medications.

How you can promote medication safety and ensure your animal's health

- ▶ Keep your animal's medications in the original labeled containers to ensure that you are giving them the appropriate medication prescribed by your veterinarian.
- ▶ Do not give human medications to your animal unless directed by your veterinarian.
- ▶ Keep a list of medications that your animal is taking - including over-the-counter products, supplements, and prescription drugs - and bring this list with you when you visit your veterinarian. It is important that your veterinarian review all medications to evaluate them for safety.
- ▶ When picking up a medication for your pet from a pharmacy, know the details of what was prescribed. If the medication is not what you expected, be sure to convey this to the pharmacist **before leaving the pharmacy**. (Due to legal restrictions, a pharmacy might not be permitted to accept returned prescription drugs and provide you with a refund.)



- ▶ A pharmacist is legally required to obtain your veterinarian's authorization before modifying in any form the veterinary prescription. This includes changing a medication from a brand name to a generic product or adjusting the medication's dosage.
- ▶ The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy has developed the Vet-VIPPS program to help consumers ensure that internet pharmacies that sell veterinary drugs are properly licensed and meet other important requirements. Further information is available at www.nabp.net. (Animal and human drugs from other countries are not approved by the federal government for use in the U.S.).

Discuss your pet's medications with your veterinarian

Your veterinarian has a relationship with you and your pet and is the best professional to assess your pet's medical needs. He or she is best educated to answer your questions regarding your pet's medications. Here are a few questions to keep in mind when discussing your pet's health with your veterinarian.

- ▶ What is the name of the medication being prescribed? What is its purpose?
- ▶ How and where should the medication be stored? What about disposal of the medication?
- ▶ How much of the medication should be given each time? How often should you give the medication?
- ▶ Should you give it before, during, or after meals? What should you do if you miss a dose?
- ▶ Should you finish using all of the medication even if your pet seems better?
- ▶ What reactions to the medication should you watch for?

Examples of important differences between veterinary and human use of medications

- ▶ **Insulin:** There are many formulations of insulin, but not all formulations can be used in veterinary medicine. Although an alternative form may be less expensive, substitution should not be made without consulting with your veterinarian, as the insulin might not be suitable for your pet.
- ▶ **Thyroid hormone:** Human doses of thyroid medications are *much lower* than those required for the treatment of dogs. If your pharmacist is unfamiliar with the dosage requirement for dogs, the dose may be concerning to him or her. It is important that your pharmacist discuss any concerns he or she has with your veterinarian to ensure that your pet receives the appropriate dose of medication.
- ▶ **Phenobarbital:** Phenobarbital is commonly prescribed to dogs at a higher dose than used in humans to treat seizure disorders. Because of the serious nature of seizure disorders, it is essential that these medications are filled exactly as prescribed by your veterinarian. If improvement is not seen after medication is initiated, it is important that you contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ **Acetaminophen (Tylenol):** Although this medication is useful in controlling arthritis in humans, it is fatal to cats and can be dangerous for dogs at certain doses.
- ▶ **Ibuprofen:** This NSAID (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug) should never be given to dogs or cats, as it can result in severe gastric ulcers or acute kidney failure. Drugs like Rimadyl, Deramaxx, Meloxicam and Previcox are veterinary prescribed NSAIDS approved by the FDA for use in animals.
- ▶ **Flea and tick medications:** Veterinary products that have been developed for treating fleas and ticks should only be used on the indicated species. Some flea and tick medications for dogs can be extremely toxic to cats. One common complication is seizures. One flea medication commonly used for dogs and cats can be fatal if given to rabbits.
- ▶ **Xylitol:** The natural sugar-free sweetener is toxic to dogs. When ingested in small amounts it can cause life-threatening low blood sugar within 10-15 minutes. Larger ingestions can result in liver failure.