

Aspirin

(as-pir-in)

Category: Analgesic (pain reliever); Fever-reducing agent; Clot prevention agent; Antiinflammatory

Other Names for this Medication: ASA, Acetylsalicylic Acid

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: 150 mg & 450 mg chewable tablets; 60 grain (3.9 g), 240 grain (15.6 g), & 480 grain (31.2 g) oral boluses; 250 mg/mL & 500 mg/mL oral gel; bulk powder. Note: These products may not be FDA-approved. **Human:** There are many dosage forms available. The 81 mg tablets (plain baby aspirin; not enteric coated) are most commonly used in veterinary medicine.

This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication. It is to help answer commonly asked questions and help you give the medication safely and effectively to your animal. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

Key Information

- ▶ Aspirin can cause serious side effects in animals and should only be used with a veterinarian's guidance.
- ▶ Cats are very sensitive to aspirin; dose carefully. Usually, aspirin is given to cats in small doses once every 2-3 days. Be certain there are no other ingredients (such as acetaminophen; Tylenol®) in the product you are using, as these ingredients can be toxic to cats.
- ▶ Dogs are more likely than are humans to get GI side effects (eg, vomiting, lack of appetite, diarrhea) and are more prone to develop bleeding in the stomach and intestines. Watch for blood in the stool (dark, tarry) or vomit (looks like coffee grounds). Contact veterinarian immediately if these occur.
- ▶ Enteric-coated aspirin is not effective in animals.

How is this medication useful?

Aspirin can be used to treat pain, fever, and to prevent blood clots in virtually all species of animals. This drug is most commonly used in animals to prevent blood clots. Aspirin is not commonly used for pain relief because there are different drugs that are safer and more effective in treating pain in animals. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this drug is the most appropriate choice.

What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?

Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.

- ▶ Other drugs can interact with aspirin, so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your animal may have now or has had in the past.
- ▶ If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian about the treatment and how well it did or didn't work.
- ▶ If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug. Aspirin can delay birth if given during the last stages of pregnancy and slightly increases the chance for birth defects to occur.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your animal has developed in the past.

When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug **SHOULD NOT** be used in patients:

- ▶ That have had an allergic reaction to it or other salicylate-type drugs (eg, bismuth subsalicylate [Pepto-Bismol®]).
- ▶ That currently have bleeding in their gastrointestinal tract (eg, stomach, intestines).

This drug should be used **WITH CAUTION** in patients:

- ▶ With severe liver or kidney disease. Aspirin toxicity is more likely in these animals.
- ▶ Scheduled to have surgery in the near future. Aspirin should be stopped at least one week before surgery occurs.
- ▶ With anemia or that have bleeding problems.
- ▶ With diabetes. Aspirin may increase blood sugar levels.
- ▶ That have had GI (stomach or intestinal) ulcers in the past.
- ▶ That are pregnant. Aspirin can delay birth if given during the last stages of pregnancy and slightly increases the chance for birth defects to occur.

If your animal matches any of these, talk to your veterinarian about the possible risks of using the drug versus the benefits it may have.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:

- ▶ Aspirin can reduce the flow of blood to the stomach and intestines resulting in stomach pain and ulcers. Early symptoms of this adverse effect are vomiting, diarrhea, or reluctance to eat. Giving aspirin with food can decrease the severity of these effects.
- ▶ Black stools or vomit that looks like coffee grounds may mean that aspirin is causing ulcerations in the GI tract.

If you see any of these, contact your veterinarian immediately.

If my animal gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?

Overdoses of aspirin can be serious. If you believe your animal has received an overdose of aspirin, immediately contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center for further advice. Animal poison control centers that are open 24 hours a day include: **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435) and **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661); a consultation fee is charged for these services.

How should this medication be given?

For this medication to work, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. It's a good idea to always check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

- ▶ Dogs usually receive aspirin 2 to 3 times daily.
- ▶ When used in cats, aspirin is usually given in small doses only, once every two or three days.
- ▶ Horses usually get aspirin twice daily at first and then once it has achieved the desired effect, the dose can be dropped to once daily.
- ▶ If you are mixing aspirin in water or a water-based liquid to give to your animal, it should be mixed right before dosing. Aspirin loses its potency quickly in water.
- ▶ Do not use aspirin that has passed its expiration date or if it has a vinegar-like odor as it may not be effective.
- ▶ This medication can be given for various lengths of time. Be sure you understand how long the veterinarian wants you to continue giving this medication. Prescription refills may be necessary before the therapy will be complete. Before stopping this medication, talk to your veterinarian, as there may be important reasons to continue its use.

What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?

If you miss a dose, give it when you remember, but if it is close to the time for the next dose, skip the dose you missed and give it at the next scheduled time. After that, return to the regular dosing schedule. Do not double-up or give extra doses.

How should I store this medication?

- ▶ Aspirin should be stored in child- and light-resistant, airtight containers away from animals and children.

Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other pets?

There are no specific precautions required when handling this medication unless you are allergic to it. Wash your hands after handling any medication.

How should I dispose of this medication if I don't use it all?

- ▶ Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug "take-back" program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix the drug with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- ▶ Do not save left over medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

- ▶ Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Please check rules and regulations before entering your animal in a competition while this medication is being administered.

If you have any other questions or concerns about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.