

# Bethanechol

(*beh-than-e-kole*)

**Category:** Cholinergic Agent

**Other Names for this Medication:** Urecholine®

**Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary:** None. **Human:** 5 mg, 10 mg, 25 mg, & 50 mg tablets. A compounded oral suspension may also be available.

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

- ▶ Bethanechol is used to help animals urinate more easily by stimulating the urinary bladder to contract. This drug can also be used in horses for gastric ulcer syndrome.
- ▶ Commonly given on an empty stomach, but if your animal vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ Side effects in dogs and cats can include vomiting, diarrhea, lack of appetite, and excessive drooling.

## How is this medication useful?

In dogs, cats, and horses, bethanechol helps the urinary bladder contract (constrict) so that it empties.

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in humans, but it is not officially approved for use in animals. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe products containing this drug in different species or for other conditions in certain situations. 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 bethanechol, 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.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, and/or 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:

- ▶ Are allergic to it.
- ▶ Have a urinary obstruction (eg, kidney or bladder stones).
- ▶ Have had recent bladder, stomach, or intestinal surgery.
- ▶ Have a gastrointestinal blockage.

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

- ▶ That have a seizure disorder (eg, epilepsy).
- ▶ With elevated thyroid hormone levels (ie, hyperthyroidism).
- ▶ With low blood pressure.
- ▶ That have breathing difficulties (eg, asthma, bronchitis).

If your animal has any of these conditions or signs, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

## What are the side effects of this medication?

### Common, but not serious side effects include:

- ▶ Dogs and cats: Vomiting, diarrhea, lack of appetite, and excessive drooling.
- ▶ Horses: Watery eyes, drooling, and colic.

You don't have to be overly concerned if you see any of these unless they are severe, worsen, or continue to be a problem. Contact your veterinarian if you have any concerns.

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

- ▶ Low energy level, tires easily, or collapse.
- ▶ Slow heart rate, abnormal heart rhythms, or low blood pressure.
- ▶ Wheezing, coughing, or trouble breathing.

If you see any of these, it may mean the dosage is too high and needs to be adjusted. Contact your veterinarian immediately if any of these signs occur.

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

Bethanechol overdoses can cause increased salivation (ie, drooling), urination, defecation, stomach cramping (ie, colic), and watery eyes. Larger overdoses can cause serious heart problems, bloody diarrhea, shock, and breathing problems. If you witness or suspect an overdose, 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?

Give this medication 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.

- ▶ Bethanechol is best given on an empty stomach, but if your animal vomits or acts sick after getting the drug, try giving it with food to see if this helps. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ Compounded liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- ▶ If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help with dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- ▶ This medication can be given for various lengths of time. Be sure you understand how long your 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. However, 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?

- ▶ Store this medication in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature in tight containers.
- ▶ If your veterinarian or pharmacist has made (compounded) a special formulation for your animal, follow the storage recommendations and expiration date for the product.
- ▶ Keep away from children and other animals.

### 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?

- ▶ Bethanechol normally has a slight fishy odor; this does not mean that the drug has gone bad.
- ▶ Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. 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.**