

# Bismuth Subsalicylate

(biz-muth sub-sal-iss-ih-layt)

**Category:** Antidiarrheal

**Other Names for this Medication:** Pepto-Bismol®, BSS

**Common Dosage Forms:** **Veterinary:** 5%, 10%, & 20% oral paste; 1.75% oral suspension; 262 mg tablets. **Human:** Various OTC regular strength and extra-strength oral suspensions; 262 mg tablets & caplets; 262 mg chewable tablets.

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

- ▶ May be given with or without food. 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.
- ▶ Used to treat diarrhea or part of “triple therapy” for treating *Helicobacter* spp gastrointestinal infections.
- ▶ Bismuth subsalicylate is generally well tolerated with few side effects but should be used with caution in cats.
- ▶ May cause a temporary darkening of the animal’s stool. This is nothing to worry about unless your animal is not feeling well.
- ▶ Bismuth subsalicylate is available OTC (over-the-counter; without a prescription). Do not give bismuth subsalicylate (or any other OTC medications) to your animal without first consulting a veterinarian.

## How is this medication useful?

Bismuth subsalicylate is a medication used to treat diarrhea in dogs, cats, horses, and cattle. It is also used as a component of “triple therapy” to eliminate *Helicobacter* spp gastrointestinal (GI) infections. Bismuth subsalicylate works by decreasing the secretion of fluids into the GI tract, which helps to stop diarrhea. It also has some protective and antibacterial properties.

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in dogs, cats, horses, and cattle for treating diarrhea. The FDA does allow veterinarians to prescribe and use 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 bismuth subsalicylate, 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, 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 or to aspirin or NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories) such as carprofen or meloxicam.
- ▶ That have a stomach or intestinal ulcer.

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

- ▶ Cats, which may be more sensitive and react strongly to bismuth subsalicylate. When it is used in cats, the animal should be under the close supervision of a veterinarian.
- ▶ Animals with preexisting bleeding disorders.
- ▶ Animals that require abdominal x-rays (radiographs), as bismuth can interfere with results.

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

## What are the side effects of this medication?

### Side effects that usually are not serious include:

- ▶ Gray-black or green-black stool color. This is normal and nothing to worry about, but if stools are tarry black or your animal has a low energy level or lack of an appetite, contact your veterinarian immediately.
- ▶ Constipation. If this is severe, worsens, or continues to be a problem, contact your veterinarian.

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

Overdoses of bismuth subsalicylate can be serious, especially in cats. 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?

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.

- ▶ Shake suspension well before giving to your animal.
- ▶ The drug may be given either with food or on an empty stomach. 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.
- ▶ Do not give this medicine within 2 hours of any other medicines unless told to do so by your veterinarian.
- ▶ Liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- ▶ Refrigerating the medication may help improve taste.
- ▶ 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 and then wait the amount of time between doses recommended by your veterinarian before giving another dose. 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, though refrigerating the liquid may help improve its palatability (taste).
- ▶ 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 leftover medication for future use or give it to others to use.

### What other information is important for this medication?

- ▶ Bismuth subsalicylate is available OTC (over-the-counter; without a prescription). Do not give anti-diarrheal (or any other OTC) medications to your animal without first consulting a veterinarian.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Do not change dosage forms (eg, brand names, tablets to liquids) without first consulting with a veterinarian or pharmacist, as the amount of drug in each dose may not be the same.
- ▶ If your pet is being treated for diarrhea, be sure that fresh, clean drinking water is readily accessible.

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