

Chlorpheniramine

(klor-fen-ir-a-meen)

Category: Antihistamine

Other Names for this Medication: Chlor-Trimeton®, Chlor-Amine®, Aller-Chlor®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** 4 mg tablets & 12 mg extended-release tablets; 2 mg/mL oral liquid & 2 mg/5 mL (0.4 mg/mL) oral syrup.

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

- ▶ Use **only products that contain chlorpheniramine as a single active ingredient**. Any other ingredients (eg, pain relievers, decongestants) found in human-label combination products can be toxic to animals.
- ▶ Antihistamines should be used on a regular, ongoing basis in animals that respond to them. They work better if used before exposure to an allergen (eg, pollens).
- ▶ May cause drowsiness (sleepiness); this effect may lessen with time.
- ▶ If using a sustained-release product, do not split or crush tablets. If using a long-acting capsule, you may empty the contents of the capsule over food, but do not allow the beads to dissolve before the pet eats the food.
- ▶ May be difficult to give to cats because it has a bitter taste.

How is this medication useful?

Allergies cause histamine release, which causes itchy skin. Chlorpheniramine blocks histamine's effects and reduces itchiness associated with allergies. It can also be used as an additional treatment for itching related to certain types of cancers (eg, mast cell tumors). As with other antihistamines, the response to this drug can vary between animals and be unpredictable, so your veterinarian may try several antihistamines to see which one works best for your animal. Chlorpheniramine may be used with another antihistamine to improve its effects.

Because this drug can cause sleepiness, it is sometimes used to calm overly excited animals.

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 chlorpheniramine, 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 pet 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, vomiting, diarrhea, itching, and/or hair loss) your pet 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 with:

- ▶ A history of allergic reactions to it.
- ▶ Appointments for allergy testing. Antihistamines interfere with the results of allergy testing. Talk with your veterinarian about when to stop giving this medication.

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

- ▶ Glaucoma, which the drug may make worse.
- ▶ Older patients.
- ▶ Working dogs (eg, guide dogs, search dogs, hunting dogs, sled dogs, rescue dogs) may become sleepy and unable to perform their duties while on this drug.
- ▶ Nursing mothers.
- ▶ Problems urinating, prostate enlargement, thyroid problems, or heart disease.
- ▶ Obstructions in the gastrointestinal tract.

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:

- ▶ The most common side effect, which is often desirable, is sleepiness. Most animals will become tolerant to this effect with time and will not get as sleepy when given the medication.
- ▶ Dry mouth and trouble urinating (eg, straining) are possible but not common.
- ▶ Cats, in particular, may become unusually excited while taking this drug.
- ▶ Infrequently, chlorpheniramine may cause gastrointestinal distress such as vomiting, decreased appetite, and diarrhea.

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

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

Chlorpheniramine overdoses are usually not serious; however, large overdoses may be serious. If you are unsure of the amount taken or if your animal has received an overdose of this drug and is showing signs such as excessive drowsiness, excitement, seizures, or severe dry mouth, contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center immediately 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.

- ▶ Most cats and some dogs do not like the taste of chlorpheniramine. If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help with dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- ▶ Liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- ▶ The drug may be given either with food or on an empty stomach. If your pet 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.
- ▶ 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 missed dose and give the medication 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 child-resistant prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature.
- ▶ 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?

- ▶ Because this drug can cause dry mouth, be sure your animal has access to water at all times.
- ▶ Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Please check the rules for your pet's sport before entering it in a competition while you are giving it this medication.

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