

# Doxepin

(dox-e-pin)

**Category:** Tricyclic Antidepressant; Antihistamine

**Other Names for this Medication:** Sinequan®, Silenor®

**Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary:** None. **Human:** 3 mg, 6 mg, 10 mg, 25 mg, 50 mg, 75 mg, 100 mg, & 150 mg capsules; 10 mg/mL oral liquid concentrates.

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

- ▶ When used as an antihistamine, doxepin should be used on a regular, ongoing basis in animals that respond to it. This drug works better if used before exposure to an allergen (eg, pollens).
- ▶ When used for behavior modification, it may take several days to weeks to determine if doxepin is effective.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Most common side effects are sleepiness, dry mouth, and constipation.
- ▶ Be sure your animal always has access to plenty of fresh, clean water.
- ▶ Rare side effects that can be serious (contact veterinarian immediately) include abnormal bleeding, lack of an appetite, seizures, collapse, or profound sleepiness.
- ▶ Overdoses (in animals and humans) can be serious; keep out of the reach of animals and children.
- ▶ Let your veterinarian know if your animal has worn a flea and tick collar in the past 2 weeks. Do not use a flea and tick collar while giving your animal this medication without first talking to your veterinarian.

## How is this medication useful?

Doxepin is a tricyclic antidepressant medication with some antihistamine effects. Allergies cause histamine release, which causes itchy skin. Doxepin blocks histamine's effects and reduces itchiness associated with allergies. Doxepin may also be used for other skin reactions related to behavior problems (eg, anxiety, nervousness). 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. Doxepin may be used with another antihistamine to improve its effects.

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 doxepin, 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.
- ▶ Some ingredients found in flea and tick collars can interact with doxepin, so let your veterinarian know if your animal has worn one in the past 2 weeks.
- ▶ 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 animals with:

- ▶ Known hypersensitivity to it or other tricyclic antidepressants (eg, imipramine, amitriptyline).
- ▶ Recent use (within 14 days) of flea and tick collars or drugs known as monoamine oxidase inhibitors (eg, selegiline, amitraz).
- ▶ 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:

- ▶ Animals that have glaucoma or dry eye syndrome (keratoconjunctivitis sicca; KCS)
- ▶ Very young or older patients.
- ▶ Working dogs (eg, guide dogs, search dogs, hunting dogs, sled dogs, rescue dogs), as they may become sleepy and unable to perform their duties while on this drug.
- ▶ Nursing mothers.
- ▶ Animals with or have a history of seizures.
- ▶ Animals with or have a history of urination problems, prostate enlargement, thyroid problems, adrenal tumors, or heart disease.
- ▶ Animals with obstructions in the gastrointestinal tract.

If your pet 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?

Doxepin is usually tolerated well, but adverse effects can occur.

**Common but usually 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.
- ▶ Excitability.
- ▶ Gastrointestinal distress such as vomiting, decreased appetite, and constipation or diarrhea (rare).
- ▶ Doxepin sometimes turns urine a blue-green color. This is not a problem.

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 this happens.

**Rare but serious side effects include:**

- ▶ Seizures (convulsions), hyperexcitability (overly excited), or coma.
- ▶ Racing or irregular heartbeat.
- ▶ Abnormal bleeding.
- ▶ Fever, which may manifest as lack of an appetite and low energy level.

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

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

Overdoses of doxepin can be serious. Seizures, elevated body temperature, and heart effects (eg, racing or irregular heartbeats) are possible. If you witness or suspect an overdose, 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.

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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 dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- ▶ If you want to stop giving the medication before the prescription is completed, first contact your veterinarian as there may be important reasons to continue giving the medication until it's gone. Doxepin must be tapered off slowly, or your animal may suffer withdrawal symptoms such as vomiting, anxiety, and shaking.

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

If you miss a dose, either give it when you remember and then wait the regular time between doses recommended by your veterinarian before giving another dose. Alternatively, you can wait and give the medication when it is usually time to give the next 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 (ie, pill minder) container at room temperature and protected from direct sunlight.
- ▶ 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?**

- ▶ When used as a behavioral treatment, doxepin usually works best in combination with behavior modification therapy.
- ▶ Because this drug can cause dry mouth, be sure your animal has access to plenty of fresh, clean water at all times.
- ▶ Flea and tick collars that contain amitraz (eg, Preventic®) may interact with doxepin; only use flea and tick collars that your veterinarian recommends. Let your veterinarian know if your animal has worn a flea and tick collar in the past 2 weeks. Do not use one on your animal while this drug is being administered without first talking with your veterinarian.
- ▶ Do not feed aged cheeses to your animal while giving doxepin, as it may cause problems.
- ▶ 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.**