

Phenytoin

(fen-i-toe-in)

Category: Anticonvulsant, Antidysrhythmic

Other Names for this Medication: Dilantin®, Diphenylhydantoin, DPH

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** 50 mg chewable tablets; 30 mg, 100 mg, 200 mg, & 300 mg capsules; 125 mg/5 mL (25 mg/mL) oral suspension.

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

- ▶ Must be dosed several times a day with food to dogs. Cats are dosed much less often and can easily develop toxic effects if doses are too high.
- ▶ Side effects in dogs include: lack of appetite, sleepiness, lack of energy, incoordination (eg, stumbling, clumsiness), weakness, and vomiting can be seen; gum overgrowth and liver problems are possible.
- ▶ Side effects in cats include: incoordination (eg, stumbling, clumsiness), weakness, sleepiness, lack of appetite, thinning skin syndrome, and low platelet counts.
- ▶ **Pregnant women should handle this drug carefully.**

How is this medication useful?

Phenytoin may be used in dogs, cats, and horses to treat certain seizure disorders or heart rhythm problems.

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 phenytoin, 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, diarrhea, itching, 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:

- ▶ That are allergic to it.

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

- ▶ Cats.
- ▶ Dogs that have liver disease or are currently receiving phenobarbital or primidone as there may be a higher risk for liver problems occurring.
- ▶ Animals that have certain heart rhythm problems; your veterinarian will check for these.
- ▶ Pregnant or nursing animals.

If your pet 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:

- ▶ Dogs: Reduced appetite, sleepiness, incoordination (eg, stumbling, clumsiness), weakness, vomiting, and gum overgrowth can be seen.
- ▶ Horses: Sleepiness and low energy level.

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.

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

- ▶ Dogs: Lack of an appetite, severe vomiting, or a yellowish tint in the whites of the eyes, skin, or gums.
- ▶ Cats: Reduced platelets may cause unexpected bleeding (eg, blood in stool, vomit), incoordination (eg, stumbling, clumsiness), weakness, sleepiness, reduced appetite.

If your animal develops any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately.

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

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: **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661) and **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435); 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.

- ▶ The drug is best given with food.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Patients are usually on this medication for an extended period, often for the rest of their lives. Give this medication according to the label's instructions and obtain refills as needed. 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?

- ▶ Store this medication in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature and protected from light.
- ▶ 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?

Pregnant women and people who are allergic to this drug should be very careful not to accidentally take it. Because **this drug has a higher risk for causing birth defects**, pregnant women should wear disposable gloves when giving doses or handling the drug and avoid inhaling any dust from split or crushed tablets. Skin or eyes exposed to powder or liquids containing the drug should immediately be washed or rinsed off thoroughly and your physician contacted.

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?

- ▶ Animals receiving this drug will need periodic blood tests to check for toxicity and/or levels of the drug in blood. Do not miss these important follow-up visits.
- ▶ 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.