

# Pyridostigmine

(peer-id-oh-stig-meen)

**Category:** Anticholinesterase Agent

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

**Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary:** None. **Human:** 60 mg tablets; 180 mg extended-release tablets; 60 mg/5 mL (12 mg/mL) syrup. Other dosage forms may be made (compounded) to accurately dose small animals.

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

- ▶ Can be given with or without food, but give the same way each time.
- ▶ Adjusting the dose is important to reduce side effects. Report side effects to your veterinarian as soon as possible.
- ▶ Overdoses can be serious, measure liquid doses carefully and keep out of reach of children and animals.

## How is this medication useful?

Pyridostigmine is used to treat weakness in animals with myasthenia gravis (a neuromuscular disorder).

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 this drug, 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 or bromides.
- ▶ With urinary or intestinal tract blockage.

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

- ▶ Animals with asthma or other serious lung conditions (eg, chronic bronchitis).
- ▶ Animals with seizure disorders (eg, epilepsy).
- ▶ Cats.
- ▶ Animals with slow heartbeats or other heart rhythm problems.
- ▶ Animals with elevated thyroid hormone levels.
- ▶ Animals with stomach ulcers.
- ▶ Animals that are pregnant or nursing.

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 usually occur when the dose is too high. The signs are usually mild and can be managed by your veterinarian by adjusting the dose of the medicine.

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

- ▶ Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea.
- ▶ Excessive drooling.
- ▶ Smaller pupil size, tearing from the eyes.
- ▶ Weakness, muscle cramping.

If any of these signs occur, contact your veterinarian.

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

- ▶ Trouble breathing, wheezing.
- ▶ Racing or slow heartbeat.
- ▶ Collapse (passing out).
- ▶ Seizures.

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 pyridostigmine can be very serious. 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: **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 can be given with or without food, but give it the same way (with or without food) each time so your veterinarian can better adjust the dose if needed.

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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 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 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?**

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?**

- ▶ 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.**