

Sertraline

(ser-tra-leen)

Category: Selective Serotonin-Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI)

Other Names for this Medication: Zoloft®

Common Dosage Forms: **Veterinary:** None. **Human:** 25 mg, 50 mg, & 100 mg tablets; 20 mg/mL oral liquid.

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 a behavior treatment, sertraline usually works best in combination with a behavior modification program.
- ▶ It may take several days to weeks to determine if the drug is effective.
- ▶ Sertraline 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 and reduced appetite. Rare side effects that can be serious include seizures and aggression; contact your veterinarian immediately if these signs occur.
- ▶ Overdoses can be very serious; keep out of reach of animals and children.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian if your animal has worn a flea and tick collar in the past 2 weeks; do not use these collars while your animal is on this medication.
- ▶ Do not stop this medication abruptly without your veterinarian's guidance.

How is this medication useful?

Sertraline is an antidepressant used for treating behavior problems such as aggression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and anxiety in dogs and cats. It is also used to stop horses from "weaving."

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 possibly cause problems when taken with sertraline, 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 sertraline, so let your veterinarian know if your animal has worn one of these collars in the past 2 weeks. Do not use one of these collars on your animal while this medication is being administered without first talking to your veterinarian.
- ▶ 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 how well the treatment 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 that are allergic to it or drugs like it (eg, fluoxetine, paroxetine).
- ▶ Combination with a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) (eg, selegiline, amitraz), or within a minimum of 14 days of discontinuing therapy with an MAOI.

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

- ▶ With epilepsy or a history of seizures.
- ▶ That are normally aggressive.
- ▶ With liver disease.
- ▶ That are old, sick, weak, or frail.

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?

Sertraline has not been used very much in dogs and cats so its adverse effects are not well known. Effects listed are based on other drugs in this class.

Common but usually not serious side effects:

- ▶ Sleepiness, lack of energy.
- ▶ Reduced appetite, vomiting, diarrhea.
- ▶ Shaking, shivering, tremors, restlessness, or panting.
- ▶ Excessive vocalization, including whining.
- ▶ Dry or itchy skin.

- ▶ Cats: Irritability, sleep disturbances, reduced appetite, and changes in urination and defecation habits (needing to go more or less often than usual).

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:

- ▶ Seizures, convulsions.
- ▶ Aggression (threatening behavior and actions).
- ▶ Hyperexcitability (over excited).

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

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

Overdoses of sertraline can cause serious effects. 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.

- ▶ Sertraline may be given with or without food. If your animal vomits or acts sick after getting it on an empty stomach, give with food or a small treat to see if this helps. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ If you notice that your animal isn't interested in eating, try hand-feeding favorite foods. Often this side effect doesn't last, but if it does, 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.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Sertraline doses must be tapered off slowly or your animal may suffer uncomfortable symptoms of withdrawal including vomiting, anxiety, and shaking.

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 (ie, pill minder) container at room temperature out of 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 behavior treatment, sertraline usually works best in combination with behavior modification therapy.
- ▶ It may take several weeks before you and your veterinarian can determine whether sertraline is having the desired effect on your animal's behavior.
- ▶ Aged cheeses may interact with sertraline; do not feed aged cheeses to your animal while giving 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.