

CLIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Updated: May 2011

Aspirin

- **Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.**
- **Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.**
- **This medicine has been prescribed for *your* pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.**

The medicine you have been given for your dog or cat is called aspirin. It may have a trade name such as Caprin® or Nu-seals®, but often will just be called aspirin or acetylsalicylic acid.

What is aspirin?

Aspirin belongs to a group of medicines called *anticoagulants*. These drugs help prevent the formation of blood clots, which could potentially lodge in a blood vessel and block the blood supply to particular parts of the body such as limbs, or to vital organs such as the kidneys and lungs. Aspirin also belongs to the group of drugs called the *non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)*. These drugs relieve pain, reduce inflammation and swelling, and can restore normal body temperature if a patient has a fever. Aspirin is rarely used in dogs and cats for these effects because there are other NSAIDs available that are more suitable and safer for use in dogs and cats.

Why has my pet been prescribed aspirin?

Aspirin is used in veterinary patients to help prevent the formation of blood clots, called thromboembolisms. Blood clots can form anywhere but are most common in the heart. They then become dislodged and move into the lungs, kidneys and limbs (where they can cut off the supply of blood). Blood clots are usually a consequence of another underlying condition, particularly heart disease but also liver disease, hormonal disease, cancer, bacterial infections, injuries or surgery, conditions of the immune system, or parasites called heartworms (some of which are only found in pets that have been abroad).

How should I store aspirin?

This medicine does not require special storage conditions. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

How do I give aspirin tablets to my pet?

Try to disguise them in a small quantity of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes.

Alternatively, they can be placed carefully on the back of the pet's tongue and their mouth held closed until the entire tablet has been swallowed.

How long will my pet need to take aspirin?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients.

What should I do if I run out of tablets?

Try not to run out. Make sure you order more tablets from your vet if your supply is getting low. If you do run out, contact your own vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If a dose is missed, just give the next dose at the normal time. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed tablet(s).

What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

Contact your vet immediately as an overdose of aspirin can be very serious. Complications may include internal or external bleeding, kidney failure and severe ulceration of the stomach wall.

Can my pet take aspirin if I am already giving them other drugs?

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications, even if you think they already know. This includes herbal or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop or pharmacy. Aspirin should not be given with other NSAIDs or with drugs called glucocorticoids (often used for skin problems amongst other conditions). If an NSAID or glucocorticoid is required *after* a course of aspirin, you should leave a gap of at least 24 hours between the last dose of aspirin and the first dose of the other drug.

What are the possible side effects of aspirin for my pet?

Aspirin may cause vomiting and diarrhoea due to irritation of the stomach. If this persists beyond 1 or 2 days, or if there is any blood present in the vomit or faeces, stop the medication and contact your vet as soon as possible. This is because aspirin may cause ulceration and bleeding of the stomach lining. There is a small risk of kidney damage, when your pet may become depressed and start drinking more water. There is also a risk of heart problems, when your pet may start coughing and become generally inactive. If your pet shows *any* unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet.

What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking aspirin?

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you should not give any further doses and should contact your vet as soon as possible for advice.

What should I do if a person accidentally takes this drug?

If a person accidentally takes your pet's tablets, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and any remaining tablets plus their container (even if it is empty) with you.

Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about this drug, or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about aspirin.

The Prescribing Cascade

This medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

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