

# Sertraline

- 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 pet is called sertraline. It may have a trade name such as Lustral® or Zoloft®, but often will just be called sertraline.

## What is sertraline?

Sertraline is an antidepressant medication within a class of drugs known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). It works by boosting a natural substance in the brain called serotonin, which is involved in the regulation of mood, anxiety, sleep, appetite and energy levels.

## Why has my pet been prescribed sertraline?

Sertraline is often used to manage behavioural disorders, including anxiety, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorders (e.g. over-grooming in cats and acral lick dermatitis (lick granuloma) in dogs). The anti-anxiety and mood regulating properties of this drug mean it may be used in the treatment of fear-based behaviours (such as storm/firework phobias), anxiety (such as separation anxiety), especially when other medications have not worked. It may also be used to treat some forms of aggression, in association with a behaviour modification plan. Sertraline is also sometimes prescribed for urine spraying in cats.

## How should I store sertraline?

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

## How do I give sertraline tablets to my pet?

Try to disguise the tablets in a small amount of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Alternatively, they can be placed carefully on the back of your pet's tongue and their mouth closed until the entire dose has been swallowed.

## How long will my pet need to take sertraline?

The duration of administration depends on the condition being treated, the response to medication and the development of any adverse side effects. It may take a period of 3–5 weeks before the effect of this medication is seen. Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients and can be for the rest of their life.

## 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, give the medication as soon as possible and continue the regular schedule. However, it is best to skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your pet's next scheduled dose. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the total stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

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

**Contact your vet immediately** if an overdose is given, since it can be fatal. The most common side effects with an overdose are vomiting, diarrhoea, lethargy, drooling, agitation and, in some cases, seizures.

## Can my pet take sertraline 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 and off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop, pharmacy or health store. Sertraline may interact with a range of medications and your vet will advise you on the safety of giving multiple medications. Sertraline should not be used with certain other antidepressant medications, such as monoamine oxidase inhibitors (e.g. selegiline). In some cases, these medications should not be given within 6 weeks of one another. It is not recommended that sertraline be used concurrently with anti-seizure medications. If you have any concerns about using sertraline with any other medications, please ask your vet for further advice.

## What are the possible side effects of sertraline for my pet?

Side effects include lethargy, decreased appetite, vomiting and diarrhoea. Trembling, anxiety, restlessness and irritability may also be seen. Dogs may pant excessively and cats may urinate inappropriately. In rare cases, there is a possibility of an increase in aggression in response to sertraline. If your pet experiences an allergic reaction to the medication, side effects may include facial swelling, hives, vomiting and seizures. If your pet shows any unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet.

## 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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### **What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking sertraline?**

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

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

If a person 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 any concerns with your pet's health, then contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about sertraline.