



Medicine series

Practice details

# Verapamil

- 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 verapamil. It may have a trade name such as Isoptin® or Calan®, but often will just be called verapamil.

## What is verapamil?

Verapamil belongs to a group of medicines called calcium channel blockers. These drugs relax the walls of blood vessels and heart muscle cells and slow down the heart rhythm by dampening electrical conduction in the heart.

## Why has my pet been prescribed verapamil?

Verapamil is used to treat rhythm disorders of the heart such as supra-ventricular tachycardia in dogs and cats.

## How should I store verapamil?

Store below 25°C in a dry place. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

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

Verapamil tablets can be put in a small amount of food that your pet likes, but food may decrease the absorption of sustained-release tablets (this occurs less with conventional tablets). Alternatively, tablets may be carefully placed on the back of your pet's tongue and their mouth held closed until the entire tablet is swallowed.

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

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you need to give this medicine. This varies between patients and may be for the rest of your pet's life. Your pet will need regular monitoring while receiving this medication.

## What should I do if I run out of tablets?

Try to ensure that you have enough medication in advance of it running out. However, if you do run out, contact your 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. 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 as an overdose of verapamil can be very serious. Large doses may cause weakness and collapse due to a slow heart rate and low blood pressure.

## Can my pet take verapamil 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, pharmacy or health store. Verapamil needs to be used with care alongside other drugs that act to reduce blood pressure (e.g. ACE inhibitors), slow the heart rate (beta blockers) or remove excess fluid (diuretics). It can also be affected by chemotherapy drugs (such as vincristine) and certain antibiotics (such as erythromycin).

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

Verapamil may increase blood glucose and therefore should be used with caution in diabetic animals. If your pet has an adverse reaction, you may see lethargy or weakness due to low blood pressure and a slow heart rate. Your pet may develop a reduced appetite due to nausea and may experience constipation. They may have difficulty breathing if they develop fluid accumulation in their lungs. This drug should be used with caution in herding breeds (e.g. collies). If your pet shows any unusual symptoms while taking this medication, please contact your vet.

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

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 medicine, they should be taken to a local hospital **immediately**. This leaflet along with any remaining medication and its container (even if it is empty) should be taken with them.

## 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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## **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 verapamil.

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