



Medicine series

Practice details

# Leflunomide

- 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 leflunomide. It may have a trade name such as Arava, but often will just be called leflunomide.

## What is leflunomide?

Leflunomide is an immunosuppressant medication. Immunosuppressants are used to treat immune-mediated conditions – conditions where the body's defence system is not functioning as it should be and may be attacking itself.

## Why has my pet been prescribed leflunomide?

Your pet has been prescribed leflunomide to treat an immune-mediated condition, such as immune-mediated polyarthritis, immune-mediated haemolytic anaemia or immune-mediated thrombocytopenia. Leflunomide will act to inhibit the action of certain overactive immune cells. This can help prevent the immune-mediated condition from progressing.

## How should I store leflunomide?

This medicine does not require special storage conditions; the tablets should be stored at room temperature, away from light. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

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

**Disposable gloves should be worn at all times when handling and administering this drug. DO NOT split or crush these tablets; only use whole ones.** Leflunomide tablets are given via the mouth. Try to disguise them in a small quantity of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Alternatively, the tablets 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 leflunomide?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients. It is important that you complete the course of treatment even if your pet seems to be well. If your pet is still unwell at the end of the course, then you should contact your vet as soon as possible.

## 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 you miss a dose, 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** if your pet receives an overdose of the medication.

## Can my pet take leflunomide 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.

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

Leflunomide can sometimes cause reduced appetite, lethargy, nosebleeds and bone marrow suppression. Your vet may want to test your pet's blood to look for some of these side effects. If you are concerned about your pet, contact your vet.

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

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you 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 contact their doctor **immediately**. This leaflet along with any remaining medication and its container (even if it is empty) should be taken with them.

## 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 vet. They will know your pet's medical history and can provide further information on leflunomide.

## 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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