

Facts About Long-Term Medications

What all pet owners should know about their pet's pills

Your pet deserves the best care. Because of this, we carefully monitor your pet's health after prescribing medication to ensure greater success in treating his or her condition. Monitoring helps us choose the proper drug and dosage for your pet's age, size, breed, and physical condition, and it helps ensure your pet's safety as we evaluate for any side effects, complications, or interactions with other drugs. Monitoring also helps us establish a baseline picture of your pet's vital organs so we know when changes indicate areas of concern. This helps us assess the treatment plan and make adjustments as necessary. Here are some facts about commonly prescribed long-term pet medications:

Arthritis medications

Deramaxx, Rimadyl, Metacam, Previcox: Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) reduce inflammation, fever, and pain. NSAIDs are generally safe for dogs and have few side effects if given as directed, although some vomiting and diarrhea may occur. We'll take blood samples to check liver and kidney function before administration. We'll also do blood tests every 6 months to detect any abnormalities that arise with long-term use. Potentially fatal bleeding ulcers in the stomach and intestines may result if NSAIDs are given with aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, prednisone, or methylprednisolone. These drugs should be used with caution in patients receiving enalapril or digoxin, and they may decrease the effects of furosemide and phenobarbital.

Allergy medications

Methylprednisolone, Prednisolone, Prednisone: Corticosteroids are commonly used to treat allergies, especially itchy skin (allergic dermatitis). If given every other day, these drugs have few side effects. Common side effects include increased appetite, thirst, and urination. Long-term daily usage or high-dose usage can lead to potentially fatal Cushing's disease, gastrointestinal (GI) ulcers, increased appetite and weight gain, panting, a dull and dry coat, GI upset, diabetes, hypothyroidism, pancreatitis, muscle wasting, or behavioral changes such as depression, lethargy, or aggression. We'll keep an especially close eye on your pet if he or she is also receiving amphotericin B, furosemide, insulin, erythromycin, or a cancer medication. And we won't ever give corticosteroids along with any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

Seizure medication

Phenobarbital, Potassium Bromide (KBr), and Zonamide are used to treat epilepsy and seizure disorders. We'll take blood tests before administration, 1 month after starting, and then every 6 months to check liver function. We will also check phenobarbital and KBr levels 1 month after starting and then every 6 months. Common side effects include lethargy or depression (especially the first week), anxiety or agitation, and increased thirst, appetite, and urination. Phenobarbital may decrease the effectiveness of antihistamines, corticosteroids, metronidazole, doxycycline, and beta-blockers