

Oclacitinib

What is oclacitinib?

Oclacitinib (brand name Apoquel®) is an oral medication used to manage itching associated with allergic dermatitis (including atopy) in dogs at least 12 months of age.

How does oclacitinib influence itch?

Oclacitinib works by inhibiting enzymes involved in itch, inflammation, and allergic reactions (janus kinase enzymes 1 & 3 [JAK1 & JAK3]). In many patients, this medication is as effective as corticosteroids (for example prednisone) with fewer side effects. Relief is often seen within 12–24 hours of giving the first tablet.

How do I give my pet oclacitinib?

For allergic dermatitis, oclacitinib is typically given by mouth twice daily for 14 days, at a dose recommended by your veterinarian, then once daily for long-term use. The initial twice-daily dosing helps bring itch under control quickly, while once-daily long-term dosing is effective for long-term control and helps to minimize side effects.

This medication may be given with or without food.

What if I miss giving my pet the medication?

Give the oclacitinib as soon as possible and resume a normal dosing schedule.

Are there any potential side effects from oclacitinib?

Most dogs demonstrate few side effects from oclacitinib, provided it is given according to label recommendations and at the prescribed interval. The most common reported side effects include gastrointestinal effects (such as vomiting, diarrhea, and decreased appetite) and lethargy. These affects can often be alleviated by giving the medication with food, in sensitive individuals.

Less common side effects may include increased susceptibility to infections, such as urinary tract infections, respiratory infections, and skin infections. Although these effects are rare, please contact your veterinarian immediately if your dog develops a fever, shortness of breath, or other signs infection. At that time, make sure your veterinarian is aware of any other medications/natural remedies that you are giving to your pet.

Are there any risk factors for this medication?

Oclacitinib should be avoided in patients with current or recent demodectic mange (demodex). In clinical trials, a small number of patients developed demodectic mange while on this medication, due to changes in the skin's immune function.

Oclacitinib has not been evaluated for use in pregnant or nursing dogs, and therefore should be avoided in these patients. Oclacitinib should also be avoided in dogs intended for breeding.

Finally, there is a small risk that oclacitinib may exacerbate some neoplastic (cancerous) conditions. For this reason, oclacitinib should be avoided in patients with cancer, or with a history of cancer.

If you have concerns about whether this medication is appropriate for your dog, please discuss these concerns with your veterinarian.

Are there any drug interactions I should be aware of?

No specific drug interactions have been reported with this medication. Short-term use of corticosteroids while on oclacitinib has been demonstrated to be safe, but prolonged corticosteroid usage while on this medication has not been evaluated and is not recommended.

Oclacitinib can be safely combined with antihistamines, cyclosporine, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), anti-seizure medications, allergy immunotherapy, and vaccines.

Is there any monitoring that needs to be done with this medication?

Periodic bloodwork monitoring is recommended for dogs that will be receiving oclacitinib on a long-term basis. Talk to your veterinarian to determine the recommended bloodwork monitoring schedule for your particular pet.

Although uncommon, some patients will develop decreased white blood cell counts on this medication, which may make them more prone to infection. Early detection, through routine monitoring bloodwork, will allow the drug to be modified or discontinued to prevent adverse effects.

How do I store oclacitinib?

This medication should be stored at room temperature (68–77°F).

If you suspect an overdose or negative reaction to the medication, call your veterinary office immediately. If they are not available, follow their directions in contacting an emergency facility.

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