

Doxycycline

What is doxycycline?

Doxycycline (brand names: Vibramycin®, Oracea®, Monodox®, Periostat®, Doryx®, Acticlate®) is a tetracycline antibiotic used to treat certain infections in small animals, such as anaplasma (a tick-borne disease), heartworm disease, and periodontal (teeth and gum) disease. Its use in cats, dogs, small mammals, reptiles, or birds to treat infections is '**off label**' or '**extra label**'. Many drugs are commonly prescribed for off label use in veterinary medicine. In these instances, follow your veterinarian's directions and cautions very carefully as their directions may be significantly different from those on the label.

How is doxycycline given?

Doxycycline is given by mouth in the form of a tablet, capsule, or liquid. If administering liquid forms, be sure to measure the medication carefully. When administering the tablets, the pill should be followed by at least 6mL of water or food – never give the pill dry. This is particularly important in cats.

To ease stomach upset, give this medication with food, and do not give with food containing dairy or iron, as calcium and iron can block the medication's efficacy.

This medication will take effect quickly, in about 1 to 2 hours, however, visible effects may take a few days to be recognized.

What if I miss giving my pet the medication?

If you miss a dose, give it when you remember, but if it is close to the time for the next dose, skip the dose you missed and give it at the next scheduled time, and return to the regular dosing schedule. Never give your pet two doses at once or give extra doses.

Are there any potential side effects?

The most common side effects include vomiting, diarrhea, and lack of appetite, and these signs may be eased by giving the medication with food. Increases in liver enzymes on bloodwork may also occur, more commonly in dogs than in cats.

This medication may also make your pet's skin more sensitive to sunlight and therefore sunburn, especially of the hairless areas like the nose, eyelids, and ears is possible.

This short-acting medication should stop working within 24 hours, although effects can be longer in pets with liver or kidney disease.

More serious side effects include liver failure characterized by a yellowing of the skin, as well as seizures, bleeding, behavior changes, trouble swallowing, or an upset stomach when doxycycline has not been just given. Contact your veterinarian if any of these serious side effects occur.

Are there any risk factors for this medication?

Doxycycline should not be used in pets that are allergic to it. It should not be used in pets during the first half of pregnancy and should be used with significant caution in the last half of pregnancy. It should be used with caution in pets with significant liver disease or in young pets that are still developing bones and teeth. Because this medication is excreted in milk, it should not be used in nursing animals.

Are there any drug interactions I should be aware of?

The following medications should be used with caution when given with doxycycline: oral antacids, avermectins, bismuth subsalicylate, kaolin, pectin, enrofloxacin, oral iron, penicillins, phenobarbital, sucralfate, and warfarin.

Be sure to tell your veterinarian about any medications (**including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies**) that your pet is taking.

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

There is no specific monitoring that needs to be done while your pet is taking this medication. Your veterinarian may monitor your pet to be sure that the medication is working. Monitor for serious side effects and alert your veterinarian if these are noted.

How do I store doxycycline?

Doxycycline tablets or capsules should be stored in a tight container at room temperature (15°C – 30°C or 59°F – 86°F) and away from light. The liquid suspension should be stored at room temperature and discarded after 14 days.

What should I do in case of emergency?

If you suspect an overdose or an adverse 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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