

Gabapentin

What is gabapentin?

Gabapentin (brand names: Neurontin®, Aclonium®, Equipax®, Gantin®, Gabarone®, Gralise®, Neurostil®, Progresse®) is an anti-seizure and pain medication that is used with other medications to treat seizures and is also used to treat chronic pain, primarily nerve pain. It has also been used in cats to treat fear and anxiety associated with veterinary visits.

Its use in cats and dogs to treat seizures and pain 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 direction may be significantly different from those on the label.

How is gabapentin given?

Gabapentin is administered by mouth in the form of a capsule, tablet, or compounded liquid. It can be given with or without food, but if your pet vomits after receiving this medication on an empty stomach, try giving future doses with food or a treat. The best time to give this medication is right before feeding. Measure liquid formulations of this medication carefully.

Do not give the oral liquid form made for humans, as it contains xylitol, a substance that is toxic for dogs. Do not stop this medication abruptly in pets with epilepsy, as this can cause withdrawal seizures.

This medication will take effect quickly, in about 1 to 2 hours, and improvement in clinical signs should follow.

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 sedation (sleepiness) and incoordination. Gradual increases of the medication over time is recommended to alleviate these effects.

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

Are there any risk factors for this medication?

Pets that are allergic to gabapentin should not take this medication. Use cautiously in pets with kidney disease, or pets that are pregnant and/or lactating. Do not stop this medication abruptly in pets with epilepsy, as this can cause withdrawal seizures.

Some liquid oral formulations contain xylitol, a sugar substitute that is toxic to dogs, so be cautious and read the label before administering. Never give any medication to dogs that contains xylitol as an ingredient.

Are there any drug interactions I should be aware of?

The following medications should be used with caution when given with gabapentin: antacids, hydrocodone, or morphine.

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. At home, monitor your pet for serious adverse side effects.

How do I store gabapentin?

Capsules and tablets should be stored at room temperature around 25°C (77°F), away from moisture. Follow the directions on the label for compounded liquid medications.

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.

Rania Gollakner, BS, DVM

© Copyright 2019 LifeLearn Inc. Used and/or modified with permission under license.