

Insulin

Why has my veterinarian prescribed this medicine?

Insulin is a hormone that helps the body turn the food your pet eats into energy. Insulin works by allowing the sugar to pass from the blood into the body's cells to make fat, sugar and protein. Without insulin, sugar cannot get into the body's cells. Insulin works whether the body makes its own insulin or if it is given by injection. Insulin is given when the pet has diabetes.

How do I give this medication?

- Give this medication to your pet as directed by your veterinarian. **READ THE LABEL CAREFULLY.**
- Measure the dose carefully.
- If you keep the insulin in the refrigerator, allow it to come to room temperature in the syringe before injecting.
- Try to give this medication at about the same time each day.
- **DO NOT** give the pet more medicine than directed and do not give more often than directed.
- Try not to miss giving any doses.



What do I do if I miss giving a dose?

Give the dose as soon as possible. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose, and continue with the regular schedule. Do not give the pet two doses at once.

How do I store this medicine?

- Keep this medicine out of reach of children.
- Store this medicine in the refrigerator. **DO NOT** freeze. Insulin may be kept at room temperature for up to 1 month. Discard any insulin that has been kept at room temperature for longer than 1 month.
- Unopened vials may be stored until the expiry date on the label is reached.
- Do not expose insulin to extreme heat or to sunlight. This will cause the insulin to become less effective quicker.

What are the potential side effects?

- If the pet receives too much insulin it may become hypoglycemic (low blood sugar). This could result in disorientation, weakness, hunger, drowsiness, nausea, rapid heartbeat, shakiness and possibly seizures and coma. If seizures occur, contact your veterinarian immediately.

- If the side effects are mild, offer your pet some food and contact your veterinarian. The dosage of insulin may need adjusting.
- High blood sugar is another problem that may occur. Notify your veterinarian immediately if the following symptoms occur: drowsiness, dry mouth, flushed dry skin, increased urination, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, troubled breathing, unusual thirst.
- Other side effects may occur. If you notice anything unusual, contact your veterinarian.

Are there any possible drug interactions?

- Make sure to **tell your veterinarian** what other medication you are giving to your pet.
- Quite often your veterinarian may prescribe two different medications, and a drug interaction may be anticipated. In this case, your veterinarian may vary the dose and/or monitor your pet more closely.
- The following drugs can potentially interact with insulin: anabolic steroids, alcohol, beta-adrenergic blockers, monoamine oxidase inhibitors, guanethidine, phenylbutazone, sulfapyrazone, tetracycline, aspirin and other salicylates, glucocorticoids, dextrothyroxine, dobutamine, epinephrine, estrogen/progesterone combinations, furosemide, thiazide diuretics, thyroid hormones, and cardiac glycosides.
- **Contact your veterinarian** if your pet experiences any unusual reactions when different medications are given together.

*This client information sheet is based on material written by Rita Ozolins, B.Sc., Phm.
© Copyright 2005 Lifelearn Inc. Used with permission under license. May 12, 2014*