

Mirtazapine

(mir-taz-ah-peen)

Category: Tetracyclic Antidepressant; Antiemetic; Appetite Stimulant

Other Names for this Medication: Remeron®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** Oral Tablets: 7.5 mg, 15 mg, 30 mg, & 45 mg; Orally Disintegrating Tablets: 15 mg, 30 mg, & 45 mg. Dosages may need to be made (compounded) to accurately dose cats and small dogs.

This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication. It is to help answer commonly asked questions and help you give the medication safely and effectively to your animal. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

Key Information

- ▶ May be given with or without food. If your animal vomits after receiving mirtazapine on an empty stomach, give with food or treat to see if this helps. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ Tolerated well in dogs. More side effects seen in cats and dosage may need to be adjusted if they occur. Common side effects include: vocalization, behavior changes, and tremors or shaking. Report excessive drowsiness or vocalization to your veterinarian.
- ▶ If your animal is receiving the orally disintegrating tablets, make sure hands are dry before handling the tablet. Place the tablet under the animal's tongue and hold mouth closed for several seconds to allow it to dissolve (should occur quickly). After the tablet has melted, offer your animal water.

How is this medication useful?

In dogs and cats, mirtazapine may be useful as an appetite stimulant and to prevent vomiting and motion sickness.

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in humans, but it is not officially approved for use in animals. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe products containing this drug in different species or for other conditions in certain situations. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this drug is the most appropriate choice.

What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?

Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.

- ▶ Other drugs can interact with this drug, including other appetite stimulant drugs (eg, cyproheptadine, oxazepam), so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your pet may have now or has had in the past.
- ▶ If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian about the treatment and how well it did or didn't work.
- ▶ If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug.

- ▶ Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your pet has developed in the past.

When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug **SHOULD NOT** be used in patients:

- ▶ That are allergic to it.
- ▶ That have received a MAOI (monoamine oxidase inhibitor, including selegiline or amitraz dips and collars) or have stopped taking one in the last 14 days.

This drug should be used **WITH CAUTION** in patients:

- ▶ That have kidney disease. Dosages may need to be reduced or the drug not given as often.
- ▶ That have heart disease, diabetes, severe liver disease, glaucoma, and gastrointestinal or urinary blockage.

If your pet has any of these conditions or signs, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Mirtazapine is usually well tolerated in dogs and side effects are rarely seen. In cats, mirtazapine may cause more side effects that, if they occur, can often be seen within 90 minutes of a dose. Reducing the dosage or giving smaller doses more often may help limit these adverse effects.

Side effects that usually are not serious include:

- ▶ Vocalization.
- ▶ Mild tremors or shaking.
- ▶ Sleepiness or sedation (fatigue).
- ▶ Increased affection (cats).

You don't have to be overly concerned if you see any of these unless they are severe, worsen, or continue to be a problem. Contact your veterinarian if this happens.

Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:

- ▶ Severe tremors, shaking.
- ▶ Severe hyperactivity, hyperexcitability (over excited) or agitation (nervous, upset, unable to relax).
- ▶ Low blood pressure (fainting, collapsing) if doses are too high.
- ▶ Fast heartbeat if doses are too high.

If you see any of these, contact your veterinarian immediately.

If my pet gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?

If you witness or suspect an overdose, contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center for further advice. Animal poison control centers that are open 24 hours a day include: **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661) and **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435); a consultation fee is charged for these services.

How should this medication be given?

For this medication to work, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. It's a good idea to always check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

- ▶ The drug may be given either with food or on an empty stomach. If your pet vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ If your animal is receiving the orally disintegrating tablets, make sure your hands are dry before handling the tablet. Place the tablet under the animal's tongue and hold mouth closed for several seconds to allow it to dissolve (should occur quickly). After the tablet has melted, offer your animal water.
- ▶ In cats, the drug is often given every three days, but if side effects occur, your veterinarian may reduce the dose and have you give it daily or every other day.
- ▶ Compounded liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- ▶ If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help with dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- ▶ This medication can be given for various lengths of time. Be sure you understand how long your veterinarian wants you to continue giving this medication. Prescription refills may be necessary before the therapy will be complete. Before stopping this medication, talk to your veterinarian, as there may be important reasons to continue its use.

What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?

If you miss a dose, give it when you remember and then wait the amount of time between doses recommended by your veterinarian before giving another dose. Do not double-up or give extra doses.

How should I store this medication?

- ▶ Store this medication in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature and protected from light.
- ▶ If you are using the orally disintegrating tablets, keep them stored in their blister container. Once opened, immediate use is recommended; if not used immediately, tablets should be protected from moisture and humidity.
- ▶ If your veterinarian or pharmacist has made (compounded) a special formulation for your animal, follow the storage recommendations and expiration date for the product.
- ▶ Keep away from children and other animals.

Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other pets?

There are no specific precautions required when handling this medication unless you are allergic to it. Wash your hands after handling any medication.

How should I dispose of this medication if I don't use it all?

- ▶ Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug "take-back" program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix the drug with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- ▶ Do not save left over medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

- ▶ Dosages may need to be made (compounded) to accurately dose cats and small dogs.
- ▶ Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Check rules and regulations before entering your animal in a competition while this medication is being administered.

If you have any other questions or concerns about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.