



Medicine series

Practice details

# Lorazepam

- Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.
- Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.
- This medicine has been prescribed for your pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.

The medicine you have been given for your dog or cat is called lorazepam. It may have a trade name such as Ativan® or IntenSol®, but often will just be called lorazepam.

## What is lorazepam?

Lorazepam belongs to a group of medicines called benzodiazepines, which act on a neurotransmitter called GABA within the brain and nerves to produce a calming effect. Lorazepam has anxiolytic (anti-anxiety), antidepressant, amnesic (memory-blocking), hypnotic (sleep-inducing), anticonvulsant, sedative and muscle-relaxant properties.

## Why has my pet been prescribed lorazepam?

Lorazepam is used for the short-term treatment of anxiety and fear-related disorders in dogs and cats. The anti-panic, anti-anxiety and amnesic properties of this drug make it particularly suitable to avoid relapses due to an intensely fear-inducing event. This may be a noise phobia (e.g. thunderstorms) or a situational fear (e.g. car travel or visits to the vet). Lorazepam is mainly used during a prolonged behavioural therapy programme.

## How should I store lorazepam?

This medicine does not require any special storage conditions. Store in a cool, dry place. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

## How do I give lorazepam tablets to my pet?

Treatment may be given as needed within the dosing limits prescribed, often once or twice a day. This medicine may be given either with or without food. The tablets may be disguised in a small amount of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Alternatively, they can be placed carefully on the back of your pet's tongue and their mouth closed until the entire dose has been swallowed.

## How long will my pet need to take lorazepam?

Lorazepam is used for the short-term management of anxiety disorders and is best used for management of acute anxiety episodes as part of a long-term behavioural modification plan. Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients but is often only a short period of 2–4 weeks.

## What should I do if I run out of tablets?

Try not to run out. Make sure you order more tablets from your vet if your supply is getting low. If you do run out, contact your own vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

**Lorazepam should not be stopped suddenly;** the dose needs to be gradually reduced, as acute withdrawal may result in signs of tremor and inappetence.

## What should I do if I miss a dose?

Lorazepam is best given *before* a fear- or anxiety-inducing event. If a dose is missed and your pet is on regular dosing, give the medication as soon as possible; if the drug is being used on an as-needed basis, do not give the dose after the event. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the total stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

## What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

**Contact your vet immediately** if an overdose is given. The most common side effects with an overdose are sedation, drowsiness, incoordination and amnesia.

## Can my pet take lorazepam if I am already giving them other drugs?

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications, even if you think they already know. This includes herbal and off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop, pharmacy or health store. Lorazepam is often given with other medications but will have an additive effect when given with other anti-anxiety medications. Care should be taken when giving lorazepam with opioids, antihistamines, anti-epileptics, antibiotics such as erythromycin, and with drugs for high blood pressure, cough or muscle relaxation, as their effect may be increased. Caution is particularly advised if your pet is receiving any antifungal medication such as itraconazole, as this inhibits the metabolism of lorazepam, increasing its strength. If you have any concerns about using lorazepam with other medications, please ask your vet for further advice.

## What are the possible side effects of lorazepam for my pet?

Side effects include drowsiness, confusion, incoordination, hallucinations, increased appetite, insomnia, muscle relaxation and sedation. If given to animals with fear-related aggression, this drug may facilitate uninhibited behaviour and thus lead to more serious

## The Prescribing Cascade

This medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

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aggression. Long-term treatment with lorazepam may lead to a dependence on this drug, which can result in undesirable behaviour changes if this drug is abruptly stopped.

### **What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking lorazepam?**

If your pet is unwell while receiving this medication, you should not give any further doses and should contact your vet **immediately** for advice.

### **What should I do if a person accidentally takes this drug?**

If a person takes your pet's tablets, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and any remaining tablets plus their container (even if it is empty) with you.

### **Whom do I contact if I want to know more?**

If you have any questions about this drug or any concerns with your pet's health then contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about lorazepam.