

Injectable medication

- 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.

This leaflet applies to drugs that are administered via injection. A common example is insulin which is used to treat diabetes mellitus. Injectable medications, and the syringes used to administer them, are sold under a variety of trade names.

How do I give injectable medication to my pet?

Owner-administered injectable medication is injected under the skin. Your vet will be able to demonstrate the technique. Your vet will advise you as to the timing of the injection (this is particularly important for animals with diabetes so follow your vet's advice carefully). It is important to reinforce your pet's good behaviour with lots of praise. If at first your pet does not cooperate, be patient and try again a few minutes later. Even nervous pets will usually get used to the procedure. However, if you think your pet is likely to bite you during the procedure, then you should consider the use of a muzzle.

- Use the medication and syringes that have been prescribed by your vet. It is very important that you use the right syringes for the right medication. For example, available insulins come in different strengths and must ONLY be used with the appropriate insulin syringe for the particular strength. Check with your vet or veterinary nurse if you are not sure, especially if the syringe looks different to ones you have used before.
- Check the expiration date and the time the medication has been opened (after the first dose has been withdrawn, the medication should be replaced within the number of days stated on the manufacturer's instructions).
- Wash your hands before handling the medication.
- Gently mix the medication as per the manufacturer's instructions and then draw the required dose into the syringe.
- Select the injection site. This is typically the fold of skin at the back of your pet's neck (the scruff) or along their flank.
- Gently raise a fold of skin with your non-dominant hand and insert the needle under the skin with your dominant hand.
- Once the needle has been inserted, pull back on the plunger only. If blood is seen, remove the needle and try a different location. If there is no blood, push the plunger forward to empty the syringe.

Why has my pet been prescribed injectable medication?

Some medications are most effectively administered via injection. This may be to accelerate drug absorption into the body or because oral (tablet) administration is not effective. Your vet will explain why this particular injectable medication has been prescribed for your pet.

The Prescribing Cascade

Some injectable medications are authorized for use in dogs/cats/pets. However, on occasion, your veterinary surgeon will need to prescribe a medicine not authorized in veterinary species. In these cases, the medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is being 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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How should I store injectable medication?

Some injectable medications do not contain preservatives. Thus, once opened, they should be stored in a refrigerator and replaced after the period stated on the instructions, even if you have not finished them. Return any unused or leftover medication to your vet practice for safe disposal. If you are travelling with a pet that requires this medication, keeping the medication in a cool box to maintain a low temperature is advisable, before returning it to a refrigerator. Please read the leaflet for each treatment that has been dispensed for your pet carefully and follow the storage advice. Used syringes should be disposed of in a closed sharps container. For safety, **all medicines, syringes and sharps containers should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

How long will my pet require injectable medication?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. It is important that you complete the course of treatment even if your pet seems to be well. If your pet is still unwell at the end of the course, then you should contact your vet as soon as possible.

What should I do if I run out of injectable medication?

Make sure you order more from your vet if your supply is getting low or if you need an extra dose. If you do run out before the end of the course, contact your own vet for further advice. ►

How often should I administer injectable medication?

Your vet will advise you on how often you will need to give your pet an injection.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If a dose is missed, give the medication as soon as possible. However, it is best to skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your pet's next scheduled injection. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

Sometimes you may feel that the injectable medication did not go into the pet (it may have been injected on to the fur or through the skin on to the floor). If you feel this might have happened, contact your vet and explain the situation so that they can advise you as to whether another dose is required,

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

Contact your vet immediately if your pet is given an overdose of injectable medication. This is especially important when injecting insulin as large doses of insulin can cause dangerously low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia).

Can my pet receive injectable medication 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 or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop, pharmacy or health store.

What are the possible side effects of injectable medication for my pet?

If your pet shows any unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet. Some side effects of insulin medications, such as skin reactions, increased drinking or urination, behaviour changes or an increased appetite, may be due to the dosage being too high or too low.

What do I do if I have accidentally injected myself with injectable medication?

If you accidentally inject yourself with any medication, contact your doctor immediately and tell them which medication you have injected.

Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about an injectable medication, or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about the specific medicine.