



Medicine series

Practice details

Atenolol

- 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 atenolol. It may have a trade name such as Tenormin[®], but often will just be called atenolol.

What is atenolol?

Atenolol belongs to a group of medicines that are called beta-adrenoceptor blockers or beta blockers. These drugs are primarily used to have an effect on heart rate.

Why has my pet been prescribed atenolol?

Atenolol is used to treat heart problems associated with arrhythmias (abnormal heartbeats), congenital heart diseases (such as aortic and pulmonic stenosis), other structural heart disease (such as hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy in cats), rare hormonal conditions associated with certain types of cancer (phaeochromocytoma) and, much less commonly, hypertension (high blood pressure) in both cats and dogs.

How should I store atenolol?

This medicine does not require special storage conditions. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

How do I give atenolol tablets or syrup to my pet?

Atenolol tablets or syrup can be put into a small amount of food and this can be given to your pet before their main meal. Alternatively, the tablets or syrup can be placed carefully on the back of your pet's tongue and their mouth held closed until the entire dose has been swallowed.

How long will my pet need to take atenolol?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients and could be for the rest of their life. It is likely your vet will start your pet on a low dose and slowly increase this dose upwards to get the required effect. It is important never to stop this drug suddenly but rather to wean the dose down before stopping.

What should I do if I run out of tablets or syrup?

Try not to run out of atenolol. Make sure you order more from your vet if your supply is getting low. If your pet has been receiving atenolol for a long time, **do not suddenly stop giving it**; ideally, the dose should be gradually reduced. If you do run out, contact your own vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

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 dose. **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. Atenolol overdose can be extremely serious and produce an excessively slow heart rate or abnormal heartbeat, leading to weakness, collapse and heart failure.

Can my pet take atenolol 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. Do not give atenolol to your pet if they are already taking medication for urinary incontinence (e.g. phenylpropanolamine), some other antihypertensive and antiarrhythmic drugs (e.g. calcium channel blockers), diazepam (used to reduce anxiety and fits), digoxin (used in heart failure) or diuretics (drugs used to remove excess fluid from the body and increase urine production). Problems may also arise if atenolol is given alongside several types of drugs used for a general anaesthetic. Dose adjustment may be required if your pet is on phenobarbital (used to control epilepsy) or has an overactive thyroid gland. Patients with pre-existing diabetes mellitus will require careful monitoring of their insulin requirements, as atenolol can enhance the effects of insulin. Drugs used to open up airways, often used in respiratory disease, may not work as well if taken with atenolol. If your pet progresses from structural heart disease to congestive heart failure, it is likely this drug will be down-titrated and eventually stopped. If you have any concerns about using atenolol with other medications, please ask your vet for further advice.

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.

While the editors and the BSAVA have made every effort in preparing this information leaflet, the contents and any statements are made in good faith purely for general guidance and cannot be regarded as substitute for professional advice. The publishers, contributors and the BSAVA do not take responsibility for the information provided on this leaflet and hence do not accept any liability for loss or expense incurred (by you or persons that you disseminate the materials to) as a result of relying on content in this leaflet. To this end, you are advised to consult your vet and seek their professional advice before taking any steps set out in this leaflet. If you are a vet, you must not rely on the contents in this leaflet without independently verifying the correctness and veracity of the contents. BSAVA is not responsible for any alterations made to this document from the version supplied.

What are the possible side effects of atenolol for my pet?

Atenolol can cause lethargy, diarrhoea, depression, generalized weakness and even fainting if an excessively slow heart rate or arrhythmia develops. Coughing and excessive panting can develop in the event of heart failure. If your pet shows *any* of these signs or other unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, **please contact your vet immediately**.

What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking atenolol?

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, contact your vet as soon as possible for advice. If your pet has been on atenolol for a long time, **do not suddenly stop giving it**.

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

If a person accidentally takes your pet's medicine, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and any remaining tablets or syrup 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 concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about atenolol.