

Vinblastine

BRAND NAMES: Velban, LyphoMed, and generic

BACKGROUND

Vinblastine is an extract of the periwinkle plant, which has been used to treat cancer for many decades. It works by binding to proteins (called “tubulin”) that are required for cell division. Because tumor cells divide much faster than all of the other cells in the body, tumor cells are much more susceptible to damage from vinblastine than other cells in the body.

HOW THIS MEDICATION IS USED

This medication is used to treat mast cell tumors in dogs. Vinblastine can only be given by intravenous injection. This is not a medication that one would use at home.

SIDE EFFECTS

As with many chemotherapy drugs, vinblastine might suppress the bone marrow. Signs you might see include fever, general lethargy and depression, bruising or bleeding (including bloody diarrhea), etc. Please call your veterinarian ASAP if you observe any of these problems after vinblastine is given.

If any of the vinblastine leaks outside the vein, it can damage the tissues surrounding the vein. Your veterinarian will show you where the injection was given. Please watch this site carefully over the next week for any redness, swelling, sores, or discharge. If you see any of these problems, contact your veterinarian ASAP.

Like many chemotherapy drugs, vinblastine should not be used in pregnant or nursing dogs or cats, or in male pets to be used for breeding.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER DRUGS

Drugs that inhibit a chemical called “p-glycoprotein” can increase toxicity of vinblastine, including cyclosporine (a drug that suppresses the immune system and is used for allergies), verapamil (a heart drug), phenothiazines (sedatives including acepromazine and Thorazine), and ketoconazole (antifungal).

Some other drugs can interact with this medication so tell your veterinarian about any drugs or foods that you currently give your animal. Do not give new foods or medications without first asking your veterinarian. Modified Live vaccines should never be given to any animal on cancer chemotherapy.

CONCERNS AND CAUTIONS

Vinblastine should not be used in dogs or cats with severe liver disease, extremely low white blood cell counts, infection, or pre-existing disease of the nervous or muscular system. Reduced dose can be used in pets with mild to moderate liver disease. A 50% dose reduction should be considered if a blood value called bilirubin is elevated above 2.0 mg/dl.