

Carnitine

Vitamin B₁, L-carnitine and levocarnitine are other names for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

- Carnitine is an amino acid that is essential to normal heart function. It may be used as a supplement for dogs with heart disease where carnitine is deficient. Carnitine may also protect the heart from adverse effects of certain chemotherapy drugs.
- Carnitine may be useful in cats with fatty liver syndrome.
- Carnitine may also be used in treating toxicity from certain epilepsy drugs.

Are There Conditions or Times When Its Use Might Cause More Harm Than Good?

- Some products may contain both L-carnitine as well as another form of the drug, d-carnitine. Do not use d-carnitine as this will block the effects of l-carnitine and your pet's condition may worsen.
- Usual carnitine doses may not work as well in epileptic pets that are taking a drug called valproic acid.
- If your animal has any of the above conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks of using the medication versus the benefits that it might have.

What Side Effects Can Be Seen With Its Use?

- Side effects are not commonly seen with carnitine use. Higher doses may cause vomiting and diarrhea. Giving carnitine with food may decrease stomach upset.
- Humans taking the drug may have an increase in body odor.

How Should It Be Given?

- The successful outcome of your animal's treatment with this medication depends upon your commitment and ability to administer it exactly as the veterinarian has prescribed. Please do not skip doses or stop giving the medication. If you have difficulty giving doses consult your veterinarian or pharmacist who can offer administration techniques or change the dosage form to a type of medication that may be more acceptable to you and your animal.
- If you miss a dose of this medication you should give it as soon as you remember it, but if it is within a few hours of the regularly scheduled dose, wait and give it at the regular time. Do not double a dose as this can be toxic to your pet.
- 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.
- Dogs & Cats: Carnitine is usually given to dogs and cats as capsules or as a powder mixed in food two to three times daily.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Carnitine should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- Carnitine is very expensive and may be difficult to find in pharmacies. Carnitine powder purchased from health food stores should be examined to make sure that it does not contain any d-carnitine.

References:

Lifelearn Inc.

Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook