

Furosemide

Lasix®, Disal® and Salix® are other names for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

Furosemide is used to remove excess fluid from the body in conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, and swelling.

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

- Furosemide should be used very carefully in animals with kidney disease as this drug may worsen the disease.
- Furosemide is related to sulfa drugs and should not be used in pets that are allergic to sulfas.
- Furosemide should be used very carefully in pets with diabetes and any other conditions where water and electrolytes are unbalanced.
- All of these conditions may be worsened if your pet is not eating or drinking enough. Please make sure that your pet has plenty of food and clean drinking water while on furosemide therapy. Dogs who are on diuretics are unable to conserve water when they need to, and can become quickly dehydrated if they do not have free access to water at all times. As well, if they become ill and stop drinking water, they can become dehydrated quickly.
- Furosemide interacts with many drugs possibly worsening your pet's condition. You should tell your veterinarian about any drugs that you are currently giving your pet.
- If your animal has any of the above conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks of using the medication.

What Side Effects Can Be Seen With Its Use?

- Furosemide may cause disruptions in electrolyte (salts) balance. Your veterinarian may monitor your animal's blood levels of potassium, calcium, magnesium and sodium, while your pet is taking diuretics. Many dogs who need to take diuretics long term need to also take potassium supplements to keep potassium levels from dropping. Low potassium can cause weakness, poor appetite and even kidney disease if it goes on for long periods of time.
- Furosemide can very rarely harm the nerves responsible for hearing, especially in cats. If you notice that your cat seems to have lost its balance or has a slight tilt to its head, you should notify your veterinarian immediately.
- Some animals may experience weakness from the loss of fluids and electrolytes. Other animals may experience restlessness that may be related to the increased need for urination. If your pet shows signs of excessive thirst, tiredness, restlessness, lack of urination or racing heartbeat, you should contact your veterinarian immediately.

How Should It Be Given?

- Furosemide is usually given orally to pets that are at home. Your veterinarian will probably inject it in the clinic. Furosemide may be given orally from once to three times daily depending on the severity of disease.
- Furosemide can be given with or without food.
- 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 and Cats: Dogs and cats usually receive furosemide orally every 8-24 hours.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Furosemide should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- Furosemide is a sulfa drug and owners who are allergic to sulfas should wear gloves and exercise extreme caution while handling this medication.
- If furosemide has been prescribed to your pet for heart failure, your pet will likely need to take this drug at some dose for the rest of his or her life. Please make sure you never run out of this drug, as dogs and cats who need this drug can have life threatening problems if they do not get the drug as directed. Furosemide is probably the most important drug for controlling heart failure.

References:

Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook