

Metronidazole

Flagyl®, Metrogel®, and Protostat® are other names for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

Metronidazole is an antibiotic used to kill intestinal parasites in animals (e.g., Giardia). It is also used to treat bacterial infections caused by bacteria known as anaerobes, which are bacteria that live in low oxygen environments, such as the colon or infected tissue. There are two forms of this drug: metronidazole hydrochloride and metronidazole benzoate. The benzoate form is much less bitter tasting than the hydrochloride form, but benzoate may cause problems if used for very long periods in cats.

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

- Metronidazole and drugs like it are banned for use in animals that will be used for human food.
- Metronidazole and drugs like it should not be used in animals that are known to be allergic to these drugs.
- Metronidazole should not be used in animals that are pregnant or nursing or in animals that are debilitated in any way. Metronidazole has caused birth defects in laboratory animals, especially early in pregnancy.
- Metronidazole makes it very difficult for the body to process alcohols. You should tell your veterinarian about any liquid medications that you give your pet and not allow your pet to ingest any alcoholic drinks while on this medication.
- If metronidazole is used in animals with liver disease, the veterinarian will usually use a much lower than usual dose.
- You should always give all of the medication as directed by your veterinarian. If the entire course of treatment is not finished, the germ causing the infection may become stronger than the antibiotics and cause a worsening infection.
- 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?

- Metronidazole very rarely causes side effects. Side effects reported in animals include nausea, vomiting, weakness, anemia, liver damage, blood in the urine, loss of appetite and diarrhea.
- If metronidazole is given at high doses for a long time, or to animals that can not metabolize it properly, abnormal neurologic signs can be seen. If you see your animal stumbling, knuckling over on its paws, appearing weak, walking stiffly, acting twitchy or even having a seizure, you should contact your veterinarian immediately. Fortunately, these problems usually go away within a few days after metronidazole is stopped, and cause no permanent damage.

How Should It Be Given?

- Metronidazole is given orally as tablets and liquid, once to twice daily.
- 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 metronidazole orally once or twice daily with food as a liquid or a tablet. Tablets should not be crushed or chewed as they have an extremely bitter taste and will cause your pet to drool and refuse more doses.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Metronidazole should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- Oral liquids should be shaken well and stored in the refrigerator.
- Metronidazole should never be used in animals that may be used for human food.

References:

Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook