

Mirtazapine

Remeron® is among the other names for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

- This medication is used to stimulate appetite and prevent nausea, especially in cats with kidney disease and in preventing nausea due to chemotherapy.
- Mirtazapine is used as an anti-depressant in people.

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

- Mirtazapine should not be given to patients that are allergic to it, or to animals that have received monoamine oxidase inhibitors (*e.g.*, selegiline, Anipryl®, amitraz, Mitaban®, Seresto® collars).
- Constipation might be made worse in cats who suffer from megacolon or chronic constipation.
- It may be prudent to use caution when using mirtazapine in pregnant or nursing mothers.
- 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?

- The primary side effect of mirtazapine is sedation. Because the drug is eliminated by the kidneys, this side effect might be pronounced in cats with kidney disease. If this is a problem with your pet, talk to your vet about trying reducing the dose or trying another drug to stimulate appetite or prevent nausea.
- People who take the drug might occasionally experience light headedness when standing up, due to low blood pressure. Because of this animals with heart disease should be monitored carefully when taking mirtazapine.
- Increased liver enzymes have been reported in cats taking mirtazapine, though there is no evidence that this causes any significant problems.
- If you see any of these side effects in your animal, you should tell your veterinarian immediately.

How Should It Be Given?

- Mirtazapine is usually given daily to dogs and every other day to cats.
- Dose should not exceed 30 mg per day in any animal, when used for appetite stimulation.
- After long term use, mirtazapine can cause nausea if stopped abruptly – it should be gradually decreased, according to instructions from your veterinarian.
- The following drug interactions have either been reported or are theoretical in humans or animals receiving mirtazapine. When using these drugs together, potential risks and benefits should be weighed.

- **Clonidine:** Mirtazapine may cause increases in blood pressure.
- **Cyproheptadine:** May negate the effects of mirtazapine.
- **Diazepam** (and other **benzodiazepines**): Minimal effects on mirtazapine blood levels, but may cause additive impairment of motor skills.
- **Linezolid:** Increased risk for serotonin syndrome.
- **Selegiline, Amitraz:** Increased risk for serotonin syndrome; MAO inhibitors considered contraindicated with mirtazapine.
- **Tramadol:** Increased risk for serotonin syndrome.

- 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. If you have difficulty giving any 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.
- 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.
- Mirtazapine may be given with or without food. If your animal vomits after receiving it on an empty stomach, give with food or treat to see if this helps. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.

If your animal is receiving the orally disintegrating tablets, make sure hands are dry before handling the tablet. Place the tablet under the animal's tongue and hold mouth closed for several seconds to allow it to dissolve (should occur quickly). After the tablet has melted, offer the patient water

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

This medication should be stored at room temperature and protected from extreme heat or freezing.

Mirtazapine overdose can cause lethargy or agitation, crying, panting, shaking, rapid heart rate and incoordination. These are symptoms of "serotonin syndrome."

References:

Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook