

# Pyridostigmine

Mestinon® is another name for this medication.

## How Is This Medication Useful?

Pyridostigmine is a drug called a cholinesterase inhibitor and allows the weakened muscles of pets with myasthenia gravis to work better.

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

- Pyridostigmine should be used with caution, if at all, in animals with lung spasm, slow or irregular heart beat, stomach ulcers, epilepsy or overactive thyroid.
- Cats are particularly sensitive to cholinesterase inhibitors and pyridostigmine should be used with extreme caution and careful monitoring in this species.
- Pyridostigmine should not be used in animals with a bladder or stomach blockage.
- Pyridostigmine should not be used in animals that are allergic to it or to drugs like it.
- Pyridostigmine should be used very carefully in pregnant mothers as it may cause early labor and may also cause muscle weakness in the babies.
- 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?

- Known side effects of pyridostigmine include vomiting, diarrhea, drooling, lung spasm, pinpoint pupils, blurry vision, watery eyes, irregular (too fast or too slow) heart beat, heart spasm, low blood pressure, muscle spasm and weakness.
- If your pet shows any signs of these adverse effects, you should call your veterinarian.

## How Should It Be Given?

- Pyridostigmine may be given as oral tablets or liquid, but you should not switch your pet back and forth between tablets and liquid because this can change the amount of drug that gets into your pet's bloodstream.
- 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 usually receive pyridostigmine orally two to three times daily. Cats rarely receive this drug, but if they do, it is given only once daily.

## What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Pyridostigmine should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- Other liquid drugs containing an ingredient called methylcellulose should not be given at the same time as pyridostigmine as it can inactivate the drug.
- Please give medication exactly the way your veterinarian prescribes and do not switch administered forms of the drug without your veterinarian's advice (e.g.: do not switch from tablets to liquid or from commercially available liquid to specially compounded liquid) as this may alter the effect of the drug and cause your pet to come out of remission.
- You should elevate the food bowl while feeding your pet to avoid any risk of aspiration (inhaling food into the lungs) due to weak swallowing muscles.

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### References:

*Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook*