

Spironolactone

Aldactone® is another name for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

Spironolactone is a diuretic that is used in patients with congestive heart failure who don't respond to other diuretics or who have developed a low potassium from other diuretics. Spironolactone does not cause loss of potassium like other diuretics, such as furosemide (Lasix®, Salix®, Disal®). Spironolactone works by opposing a hormone called aldosterone, and may be especially effective at treating ascites, accumulation of fluid in the belly.

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

- Spironolactone causes the body to save potassium. It should not be used in animals that already have too much potassium or where increased potassium levels could cause problems (Addison's Disease, diabetes, severe kidney failure).
- Spironolactone should be used with extreme caution in animals with liver or kidney disease.
- Spironolactone inactivates the drug called mitotane (OP-ddd, Lysodren) which is used to treat Cushing's Disease in dogs. You should not give spironolactone to a dog who is being treated with mitotane.
- 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?

- Spironolactone can cause high levels of potassium in the blood. If your animal becomes weak or lethargic (lacking energy) while on spironolactone, you should call your veterinarian.
- Spironolactone can cause loss of sodium from the blood and make your animal weak or confused. If you notice these signs, call your veterinarian.
- As spironolactone is a diuretic, it can cause too much water loss and your pet can become dehydrated. Make sure your pet has access to plenty of fresh, clean drinking water at all times.
- Some animals will get stomach upset (vomiting and diarrhea) from spironolactone.
- Some human males have developed breast enlargement from spironolactone. It is not known if this happens in male animals.
- Some cats can develop skin problems on the face while taking spironolactone.
- Spironolactone is affected by or alters the effects of many other drugs. You should tell your veterinarian about all drugs that you give your pet.

How Should It Be Given?

- Spironolactone should be given orally once to twice daily. If the commercially available tablets are not appropriate for your pet, your veterinarian may instruct a pharmacist to compound a special oral liquid which is good for 30 days if stored in the refrigerator.
- 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.
 - **Digoxin:** Spironolactone may increase the level of digoxin in the blood; enhanced monitoring of digoxin serum levels and effects are warranted when spironolactone is used with these drugs.
 - **Mitotane:** Spironolactone may decrease the effects of mitotane if given concurrently; monitor carefully.
 - **Neuromuscular:** Increase in neuromuscular blockade effects of anesthetic drugs possible.
 - **Potassium-Sparing Diuretics, Other** (e.g., **triamterene**): High potassium possible.
 - **Potassium supplements:** High potassium possible.
 - **Aspirin:** Spironolactone's diuretic effects may be decreased if **aspirin** or other salicylates are administered concomitantly.
- Dogs and Cats: Dogs and cats usually receive spironolactone orally once or twice daily.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Spironolactone should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- Specially compounded oral liquids of spironolactone should be shaken well, stored in the refrigerator, and discarded after 30 days.

References:

Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook