

Acetaminophen

Tylenol®, paracetamol and APAP are other names for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

- Acetaminophen is a pain reliever and fever reducer. It is important to know that dogs and cats have a higher normal body temperature (101°F-102°F) than humans. These temperatures are not considered to be fever in dogs and cats and should not be treated with anti-fever medications.
- Acetaminophen is not frequently used in animal patients, but may be useful when other pain relievers cause harm to the stomach and kidneys, or in dogs with end of life pain. Acetaminophen is not usually used alone in dogs, but is combined with a strong pain reliever called codeine, in Tylenol 4®.

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

- Acetaminophen should NEVER be used in cats as death may result. It binds with their hemoglobin in their red blood cells, making it unable to carry oxygen to the tissues, resulting in asphyxia. Very small doses of acetaminophen (1/2 of a regular strength Tylenol®) can kill an adult cat.
- Acetaminophen is a human medication that should be used very carefully in treating dogs, especially when the dog has liver problems.
- Acetaminophen is used safely in pregnant humans, but should probably be used only with caution in pregnant animals.
- Acetaminophen should not be used with other pain relievers or fever reducers unless instructed by your veterinarian.
- 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?

- Some dogs may experience stomach upset, kidney problems or blood cell problems.
- If too much acetaminophen is used, your pet could develop liver failure and severe blood problems.
- Because acetaminophen is not routinely used in veterinary medicine, experience on its adverse effect profile is limited.
- The following drug interactions with acetaminophen have either been reported or are theoretical in humans or animals and may be of significance in veterinary patients. Unless otherwise noted, use together is not necessarily contraindicated, but weigh the potential risks and perform additional monitoring when appropriate.
 - **Phenobarbital:** Increased conversion of acetaminophen to chemical toxic to the liver.
 - **Doxorubicin (Adriamycin®):** May lead to increased liver toxicity.
 - **Fenbendazole (Panacur®, safeguard®):** May increase the risk for liver toxicity.
 - **Isoniazid:** Possible increased risk of liver toxicity.
 - **Acepromazine, chlorpromazine:** Possible increased risk for low body temperature.
 - **Propylene glycol:** Foods containing propylene glycol (often found in wet cat foods and soft-moist foods) may increase the severity of blood cell side effects.

How Should It Be Given?

- 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.

- 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: Give this medication exactly as instructed by your veterinarian and do not miss any doses. If you see signs of blood in the stools or urine, or if you see vomiting, call your veterinarian immediately.
- Do not give this medication to cats as it will likely kill them.
- Keep this medication away from all children as overdoses can be poisonous.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Capsules or tablets should be stored at room temperature.
- You should watch your pet for any signs of the side effects listed previously.
- There are many different brands and strengths of this medication. Do not buy an over the counter substitute without the advice of your veterinarian or pharmacist. Infant drops are more concentrated and can cause increased toxicity.

References:

Plumb Veterinary Drug Handbook

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