

## **Lactulose**

*Cephulac®*, *Cholac®*, *Constulose®*, *Enulose®* and *Kristalose®* are other names for this medication.

### **How Is This Medication Useful?**

- Lactulose is a medication that is used as a stool softener to treat constipation. Some cats with a condition called megacolon (flaccid intestines causing constipation) may need to receive lactulose for most of their lives.
- It can also be used in liver disease to help reduce ammonia that can build up in the blood. Ammonia levels need to be reduced in animals with severe liver disease producing a neurologic problem called hepatic encephalopathy (HE).

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

- Lactulose is comprised of sugars and may cause problems in diabetic animals. You may need to alter your pet's insulin dose when administering lactulose.
- If overdosed, lactulose can cause diarrhea and even dehydration.
- As lactulose can cause diarrhea, it should be used very carefully in animals with fluid and electrolyte imbalances. If your pet shows signs of weakness, incoordination or irregular heartbeat, you should contact your veterinarian immediately.
- 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?**

- Lactulose can rarely cause increased flatulence, and cause bloating of the stomach and belly.
- Cats sometimes dislike the taste, and administration to cats can be difficult in some cases.
- If using lactulose for hepatic encephalopathy, do not use it with other laxatives as the loose stools can be falsely attributed to the lactulose with resultant inadequate therapy for hepatic encephalopathy.
- In case of diarrhea, make sure your pet has plenty of water to drink, to prevent dehydration.

If your pet experiences any of these problems, please contact your veterinarian.

### **How Should It Be Given?**

- Lactulose is given orally as a liquid, usually twice to four times daily.
- To treat constipation, it should be given until the pet produces 2-3 very soft stools daily.
- It can also be given as an enema for patients that are in a severe liver failure crisis, with hepatic encephalopathy.

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 cause side effects like diarrhea and cramping.

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.

### **What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?**

- Lactulose should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- Shake well before use and store preferably at room temperature (avoid freezing). Refrigeration might make the solution very thick and difficult to remove from the container.
- If exposed to heat or light, darkening or cloudiness of the solution may occur, but apparently does not affect drug potency.
- Oral antacids such as TUMS or Roloids may reduce the colonic acidification effects (efficacy) of lactulose.

### **References**

1. Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.
2. Gigi Davidson and Donald Plumb. Veterinary Drug Handbook – Client Information Edition. 2003.