



Medicine Safety Tips For Pets

Imagine your dog or cat is sick, and you head to the veterinary clinic or animal hospital. The veterinarian prescribes medicine that you hope will make your pet better. But just like people, errors with medicine can happen. In fact, there are many opportunities to make a mistake when a pet is treated with medicines. Errors can happen at the veterinary clinic when prescribing medicines or when dispensing the pet's medicine. Mistakes can even happen in a pharmacy if prescriptions for pets are filled in the same pharmacies that serve human patients. Or errors can happen at home, when the pet owner gives their pet the medicine.

There are a number of steps you can take to prevent errors with medicines for your pet. First, before you leave the veterinarian's office, be sure you know the answers to the following questions:

- What is the name of the medicine?
- What is the medicine supposed to do?
- How much of the medicine should I give each time?
- How should I give the medicine to my pet?
- If the medicine comes with a device or is packaged with a measuring device, how is it used? (Ask your veterinarian or pharmacist, if filling a prescription at your community pharmacy, to show you how to use the device properly.)
- How many times a day should I give the medicine?
- Should I give the medicine before, during, or after meals?
- How should I store the medicine?
- What should I do if I forget to give a dose to my pet?
- Should I finish giving all the medicine, even if my pet seems better?
- Are there reactions I should look for and call you about right away?
- What steps do I follow if my pet accidentally swallows a human or pet medicine?

Next, help your veterinarian keep your pet safe by doing the following:

- Keep a list of all medicines that your pet takes—including over-the-counter products, supplements, and prescription drugs—and bring it with you to the veterinary office
- Discuss any medicines that your pet is allergic to or that have caused problems in the past
- Discuss any serious or chronic health conditions that your pet may have

Also, there are some simple steps you can take at home to avoid errors and ensure pets do not accidentally swallow a medicine:

- Store animal and human medicines out of reach of pets
- Keep pets away from any medical tubing (e.g., IV chemotherapy lines) used in the home
- Ensure pets do not lick the medicine off the skin of the owner, or other family members/visitors if the medicine has been applied to the skin
- Keep pet medicines stored away from human medicines to prevent mix-ups
- Keep your pet's medicines in their original labeled containers
- Do not share the medicine for one animal with another animal unless directed by a veterinarian
- Do not give human medicines to your pet unless directed by a veterinarian

Finally, we encourage people to report errors, side effects, ineffectiveness, or defects with animal medicines to the Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM). The CVM provides a YouTube video entitled *Your Report Matters! How to Report Side Effects or Product Problems with Drugs Used in Animals*. The video encourages both veterinarians and animal owners to report adverse events to them. For details on reporting and to watch the video, visit: www.ismp.org/ext/728. You can also report errors to ISMP's Consumer Medication Errors Reporting (ISMP CMERP) by going to: www.ismp.org/form/cmerp-form.