

Amitriptyline

(a-mih-trip-ti-leen)

Category: Tricyclic Behavior Modifier; Antipruritic; Neuropathic Pain Modifier

Other Names for this Medication: Elavil®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** 10 mg, 25 mg, 50 mg, 75 mg, 100 mg, & 150 mg tablets. Compounded dosage forms may be available.

This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication. It is to help answer commonly asked questions and help you give the medication safely and effectively to your animal. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

Key Information

- ▶ May be given with or without food. If your animal vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ May take several days to weeks to determine if the drug is effective.
- ▶ Most common side effects are: drowsiness (sleepiness), dry mouth, and constipation. Be sure your animal has access to plenty of fresh water at all times.
- ▶ Rare side effects that can be serious (contact veterinarian immediately) include: abnormal bleeding, fever, seizures, or a rapid or irregular heart rate.
- ▶ Overdoses can be very serious. Keep out of reach of animals and children.
- ▶ Let your veterinarian know if your animal has worn a flea collar in the past two weeks. Do not use a flea collar on your animal while it is on this medicine without first talking to your veterinarian.

How is this medication useful?

Veterinarians may prescribe amitriptyline for treating a variety of problems in dogs, cats, and birds. This drug has been used to treat behavior disorders such as separation anxiety (ie, pet feels anxious when away from you) and generalized anxiety in dogs. Signs of these disorders include excessive grooming, biting or chewing of skin, destructive behavior, in addition to urine spraying in cats and feather plucking in birds. Amitriptyline has also been tried in dogs and cats to reduce itching and pain caused by nerve injury. Amitriptyline has been used to treat urinary bladder inflammation (ie, feline idiopathic cystitis [FIC]).

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in humans, but it is not officially approved for use in animals. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe products containing this drug in different species or for other conditions in certain situations. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this drug is the most appropriate choice.

What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?

Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.

- ▶ Other drugs can interact with amitriptyline, so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.

- ▶ Ingredients (eg, amitraz) found in some flea and tick collars can interact with amitriptyline so let your veterinarian know if your animal wore one in the past two weeks.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your pet may have now or has had in the past.
- ▶ If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian about the treatment and how well it did or didn't work.
- ▶ If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your pet has developed in the past.

When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug **SHOULD NOT** be used in patients:

- ▶ That are allergic to it or drugs like it (eg, clomipramine, imipramine).

This drug should be used **WITH CAUTION** in patients:

- ▶ With seizure disorders (eg, epilepsy), diabetes mellitus, adrenal gland tumors, glaucoma, dry eye syndrome, liver, thyroid, or severe heart disease.
- ▶ With too fast or irregular heart rates.
- ▶ That are old or very young.

If your pet has any of these conditions or signs, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Common, but not serious side effects include:

- ▶ Drowsiness (sleepiness).
- ▶ Dry mouth.
- ▶ Constipation.

You don't have to be overly concerned if you see any of these unless they are severe, worsen, or continue to be a problem. Contact your veterinarian if this happens.

Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:

- ▶ In cats the following side effects are rare: Excessive drooling, trouble urinating, lack of appetite, vomiting, unsteadiness, unkempt hair coat.
- ▶ Seizures (convulsions), hyperexcitability (over excited), or coma.
- ▶ Very fast or irregular heart rate.
- ▶ Abnormal bleeding or fever.

If you see any of these, contact your veterinarian immediately.

If my pet gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?

Overdoses of amitriptyline can be very serious. Neurologic (brain) effects (eg, seizures, high body temperature) and heart effects (too fast or irregular heartbeats) are possible. If you witness or suspect an overdose, immediately contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center for further advice. Animal poison control centers that are open 24 hours a day include: **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435) and **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661); a consultation fee is charged for these services.

How should this medication be given?

For this medication to work, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. It's a good idea to always check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

- ▶ May be given with or without food. If your pet vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ Compounded liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- ▶ If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- ▶ This medication can be given for various lengths of time. Be sure you understand how long your veterinarian wants you to continue giving this medication. Prescription refills may be necessary before the therapy will be complete. Before stopping this medication, talk to your veterinarian, as there may be important reasons to continue its use. Amitriptyline must be tapered off slowly or your animal may suffer uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms including vomiting, anxiety, and shaking.

What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?

If you miss a dose, either give it when you remember and then wait the regular time between doses recommended by your veterinarian before giving another dose or and give it when it is usually time to give the next dose. Do not double-up or give extra doses.

How should I store this medication?

- ▶ Store this medication in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder (ie, pill minder) container at room temperature and protected from direct sunlight.
- ▶ If your veterinarian or pharmacist has made (compounded) a special formulation for your animal, follow the storage recommendations and expiration date for the product.
- ▶ Keep away from children and other animals.

Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other pets?

There are no specific precautions required when handling this medication unless you are allergic to it. Wash your hands after handling any medication.

How should I dispose of this medication if I don't use it all?

- ▶ Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug "take-back" program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix the drug with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- ▶ Do not save left over medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

- ▶ Like all behavioral treatments, amitriptyline usually works best in combination with behavior modification therapy.
- ▶ Because this drug can cause dry mouth, be sure your animal has access to plenty of fresh water at all times.
- ▶ Flea collars that contain amitraz (eg, Preventic®) may interact with amitriptyline; only use flea collars that your veterinarian recommends. Let your veterinarian know if your animal wore a flea collar in the past two weeks. Do not use one on your animal while giving this medicine without first talking to your veterinarian.
- ▶ Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Check rules and regulations before entering your animal in a competition while this medication is being administered.

If you have any other questions or concerns about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.