

Cephalexin

(sef-a-lex-in)

Description:

Cephalosporin Antibiotic

Other Names for this Medication: Keflex®,
Rilexene®

Common Dosage Forms:

Veterinary: 75 mg, 150 mg, 300 mg, & 600 mg chewable tablets. **Human:** 250 mg & 500 mg tablets; 250 mg, 333 mg, 500 mg, & 750 mg capsules; 125 mg/5 mL (25 mg/mL) & 250 mg/5 mL (50 mg/mL) oral suspension.

Antimicrobial Classification:

Highly Important

This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication and has not been reviewed by FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine. This sheet can help answer commonly asked questions but is not a substitute for medical advice. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

Key Information

- Can be given with or without food, but gastrointestinal side effects (eg, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea) might be prevented if given with 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.
 - Most common side effects are diarrhea, vomiting, and loss of appetite.
 - Be sure to give as long as your veterinarian has prescribed, even if your animal seems better.
 - Cephalosporin antibiotics have an odor that resembles cat urine, but this is normal.

How is this medication useful?

In dogs and cats, cephalexin can be useful to help treat infections of the skin, respiratory tract, and urinary tract. The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in humans and dogs, but it is not officially approved for use in other species. The FDA does allow veterinarians to prescribe and use human products containing this drug in animals 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 cephalexin, 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.
- Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your animal 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 worked 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 animal has developed in the past.

How long until I will know if this medication is working, and how long will the effects of this medication last?

This medication should start having effects within 1 to 2 hours; however, you may not see the effects of this medication outwardly. Your animal should begin feeling better within 1 to 2 days. The effects of this medication are short-lived, meaning they will stop working within 24 hours, although the benefits may be prolonged if your animal has decreased kidney and/or liver function.

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, other cephalosporins).

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

- That have severe kidney disease.

If your animal matches either of these conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the possible risks of using the medication versus the benefits that it might have.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Side effects that usually are not serious include:

- Diarrhea, vomiting, and loss of appetite.

You don't have to be overly concerned if you see any of these signs 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:

- Complete loss of appetite in cats can sometimes cause severe liver problems.
- Fever, rashes, trouble breathing, and anemia, which may be allergic reactions to the drug.
- Severe skin irritation may occur in certain cats.

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

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

Vomiting is the most likely adverse effect after an overdose, but larger overdoses of cephalexin can be serious and can cause anemia and damage to the kidneys and nervous system. If you witness or suspect an overdose, 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.

- Cephalexin can be given with or without food, but 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.
- Liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully and stored in the refrigerator and need to be shaken well before giving. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes. Liquid forms of this drug should be discarded 14 days after mixing.
- If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help dosing and reduce the stress of medication time for both you and your animal.
- This medication can be given for various lengths of time. Be sure you understand how long the 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.

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

If you miss a dose, give it when you remember, but if it is close to the time for the next dose, skip the dose you missed, and give it at the next scheduled time. After that, return to the regular dosing schedule. Do not double-up or give extra doses.

How should I store this medication?

- Store tablets and capsules in their original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder (ie, pill minder) container at room temperature. Liquid forms (suspension) should be stored in the refrigerator; any unused suspension should be thrown out after 14 days.
- 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 animals?

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 leftover medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

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 about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.