

## Chloramphenicol

(klor-am-fen-i-kol)

**Description:** Antibiotic

**Other Names for this Medication:** Chloromycetin®,  
Viceton®

**Common Dosage Forms:**

**Veterinary:** 250 mg, 500 mg, & 1000 mg tablets.

**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

- Results are best when given with food. Its extremely bitter taste can make administration by mouth difficult. If your animal vomits after getting the drug, contact your veterinarian.
  - Usually given three times daily. Missing doses can cause the drug to not work properly for your animal.
  - Complete the entire course of antibiotics prescribed by your veterinarian even if your animal appears well.
  - Rarely, this drug can be very toxic to humans. Wear gloves when handling this medication.
  - Most common adverse effects are stomach upset, vomiting, and diarrhea; cats may be more susceptible to the serious adverse effects of this drug (eg, bone marrow and liver damage).
- Banned for use in animals that are used for food (including egg laying chickens and dairy animals).

### How is this medication useful?

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in dogs, cats, and horses for treating certain infections.

It is most commonly used to treat diseases caused by ticks, such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Chloramphenicol is also used to treat brain and eye infections as well as to treat abscesses and certain infections that have become resistant to other antibiotics. In horses, chloramphenicol is one of the few antibiotics that can be given by mouth without causing serious diarrhea.

The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe and use products containing chloramphenicol in different species or for other conditions in certain situations. The FDA has banned the use of this drug in animals that produce milk or eggs or that are used for meat that will be eaten by humans. 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.

- Since this drug must be given three times daily, you should let your veterinarian know if your schedule prevents this.
- Other drugs can interact with this drug, 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 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 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, florfenicol).
- That will be eaten by humans or will produce food (eg, milk and eggs) that will be eaten by humans.

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

- Animals that have kidney or liver damage.
- Young animals, especially kittens.
- Animals with any blood problems, including anemia.
- Nursing animals, as chloramphenicol drug crosses into the milk and can be toxic to young animals.

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

#### **What are the side effects of this medication?**

*Side effects that usually are not serious include:*

- Stomach upset, vomiting, and diarrhea.

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:*

- Tiredness, bruising, or bleeding may indicate damage to the bone marrow.
- Loss of appetite (eating less or not at all) may be a sign of damage to the liver.

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?**

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.

- Chloramphenicol should be given with food.
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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 with 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.

#### **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 this medication in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature and protected from light.
- 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?**

Chloramphenicol can cause serious adverse effects in people that are exposed to this drug. Disposable gloves should be worn while handling this medication; do not reuse gloves. Once used, the gloves should be thrown out in the trash. Do not allow the drug to contact your skin, eyes, or mucous membranes (eg, inside the mouth, nose, ears). If your animal vomits after dosing, wear gloves when disposing of vomit.

#### **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 is not allowed in animals that produce milk or eggs or that are used for meat that will be eaten by humans.
- 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.**