

Aluminum Hydroxide

(ah-*loo*-min-um hye-*drocks*-ide)

Category: Oral Antacid/Phosphate Binder

Other Names for this Medication: Amphojel®, Alternagel®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** 320 mg/5 mL (64 mg/mL) oral suspension; aluminum hydroxide may also be provided as bulk powder or be made (compounded) by your pharmacist or veterinarian into dosage forms that are easier to use in animals.

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

- ▶ Used sometimes as an oral antacid, but more commonly to help reduce phosphorous in animals with kidney problems.
- ▶ For phosphorous lowering, give either just before feeding or mixed in well with food. If your pet is not eating, administration of this medication will not lower phosphorous levels.
- ▶ Don't give with other oral drugs until checking with your veterinarian or pharmacist.
- ▶ Aluminum toxicity is possible, but extremely rare. Contact your veterinarian if you see any stumbling, weakness, trouble walking, or behavior changes.

How is this medication useful?

In animals that have kidney failure, aluminum hydroxide can help reduce the amount of phosphorus in the blood by binding up phosphorus in food and keeping it from being absorbed. Aluminum hydroxide can also be used as an oral antacid, usually in combination with magnesium hydroxide (such as Maalox®). The human oral liquid dosage forms are generally not easily given to dogs or cats so powder forms that are mixed into food are usually used. A diet low in phosphorus is usually recommended by veterinarians when trying to lower phosphorous levels in an animal.

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 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.

- ▶ Aluminum hydroxide can prevent the absorption of some other drugs, 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 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 worked or didn't work.
- ▶ If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug. Aluminum hydroxide is very likely to be safe to use during pregnancy or when nursing.

- ▶ 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:

- ▶ With too low phosphorous in their blood.

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

- ▶ That have chronic constipation.

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?

- ▶ Aluminum hydroxide is usually tolerated without side effects, but constipation can occur. If you notice your pet is not having regular bowel movements each day, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ Very rarely, aluminum toxicity can occur, especially if used in patients with very severe kidney problems at high dosages for a long time. If your dog or cat shows signs of neurologic (brain) problems (eg, stumbling, weakness, trouble walking, behavior changes), contact your veterinarian.

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

One-time overdoses of aluminum hydroxide are usually not serious. If doses are too high for a longer period of time, abnormal amounts of salts can occur in the blood and the aluminum could become toxic. If you witness or suspect an overdose and your animal appears sick, 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.

- ▶ To lower phosphorous in the blood, aluminum hydroxide is usually given to dogs or cats as a powder mixed well in with canned food. Pills or capsules should be given just before feeding.
- ▶ 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.

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 liquid in the original container at room temperature; avoid freezing. Store powder in a sealed container to keep dry.
- ▶ If your veterinarian or pharmacist has made (compounded) a product for you to use, follow any storage recommendations for that product.
- ▶ Keep all products away from children and other animals.

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

- ▶ Rarely, aluminum hydroxide can cause contact dermatitis (rash, eczema) when it comes in contact with skin or mucous membranes. If you get any on your skin, wash it off. Consider wearing gloves when handling the powder, particularly if you have sensitive skin. Be careful not to inhale the powder as it can cause lung irritation; consider wearing a dust mask.
- ▶ There are no specific precautions required when handling the liquid oral suspension, but it is always a good idea to 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.

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