

Albuterol

(al-byoo-ter-ol)

Category: Bronchodilator

Other Names for this Medication: Salbutamol, Proventil®, Ventolin®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** 90 mcg per puff aerosol for inhalation; 0.021%, 0.042%, 0.083%, & 0.5% liquid for nebulization; 2 mg, 4 mg, & 8 mg tablets; 2 mg/5mL (0.4 mg/mL) oral syrup.

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

- ▶ Usually given as an inhaled aerosol (inhaler) into the lung using special devices that are designed for dogs, cats, and horses.
- ▶ Overdoses can be serious and can be associated with ingesting the tablets or biting into an inhaler canister.
- ▶ Shake inhaler well before each use.
- ▶ Cats can be difficult to treat using the aerosol, as they may dislike the taste of the drug as they inhale it. Practicing use of the device without the medication may help.

How is this medication useful?

Albuterol is used to improve breathing by opening airways to relieve wheezing caused by an asthma attack or similar lung conditions. The inhaled formula is most commonly used, as it works quickly during emergency situations.

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 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 albuterol, 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 as albuterol can delay labor.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about all medication side effects your animal 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.
- ▶ Long term. This drug is for intermittent, rescue therapy only.

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

- ▶ Heart disease.
- ▶ Diabetes.
- ▶ Excessive thyroid hormone (hyperthyroidism).
- ▶ High blood pressure.
- ▶ Seizure disorders (eg, epilepsy, convulsions).

If your animal 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:

- ▶ Slightly increased heart rate and trembling. These usually are mild and are not common when the aerosol is used.

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:

- ▶ Lower energy levels
- ▶ Rapid breathing; excessive panting
- ▶ Aggressive or threatening behaviors and actions
- ▶ Agitation (ie, anxious, nervous, unable to relax)
- ▶ Vomiting

Contact your veterinarian if these effects occur; they may mean the dose is too high or there has been an overdose.

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

Overdoses of albuterol can be serious. Most commonly, this will be seen as excessive panting and aggressive or abnormal behaviors, including agitation (ie, anxious, nervous, upset) and trembling; vomiting can also be seen. Some dogs have had serious overdoses when they bite into the inhaler canister. 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.

- ▶ When using the inhaler, a special device is placed around the mouth and nose of the animal to allow the medication to quickly enter the lungs. Your veterinarian will instruct you on the best way to use these products.
- ▶ Cats can be difficult to treat using the inhaler, as they may not like the taste and the hissing sound the canister makes when the medication is discharged.
- ▶ Practice using the mask on your animal first without using the medication so that they will get used to it and will be more likely to accept it when the medication is given.
- ▶ Shake the aerosol container well before each use.
- ▶ 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 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 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?

- ▶ Albuterol inhaler canisters should be stored at room temperature. Do not allow the canister to get above 120°F (49°C), as the canister could explode.
- ▶ Do not store this medicine in your car or other places where it can get very hot.
- ▶ Store tablets and liquid in the original prescription bottles or an approved dosage reminder (ie, pill minder) container at room temperature out of direct sunlight.
- ▶ 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?

- ▶ Empty inhaler canisters may be disposed of in the household trash.
- ▶ 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?

- ▶ 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.