

Buprenorphine

(byoo-pre-nor-feen)

Category: Opiate (partial agonist); Analgesic (pain reliever)

Other Names for this Medication: Buprenex®, Simbadol®, Belbuca®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: 1.8 mg/mL injection. **Human:** Injection: 0.3 mg/mL injection; 2 mg & 8 mg sublingual tablets. There are also transdermal patches available in multiple dosing sizes.

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

- ▶ Opiate analgesic often used for short-term pain relief. Given either by injection or squirted into the mouth (buccally).
- ▶ When given by mouth to cats, squirt just under the tongue or in the cheek pouch for the best effect. The doses are very small for this potent drug, so be sure that you are giving the exact amount your veterinarian has prescribed.
- ▶ Sedation (sleepiness) is the most common side effect.
- ▶ Controlled drug in USA. It is against federal law to use, give away or sell this medication to others than for whom it was prescribed.

How is this medication useful to your pet?

Buprenorphine is usually used as a short-term analgesic (pain killer) for mild to moderate pain in small animals. In cats, buccal administration (squirted into the mouth) of the injectable liquid is often used to control pain after surgeries. Buprenorphine is commonly used in combination with other analgesics, such as NSAIDs (eg, carprofen, meloxicam).

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in cats and humans, but it is not officially approved for use in other animals. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe products containing this drug in different animals 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 to my pet?

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 buprenorphine, 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.
- ▶ 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.

- ▶ Ask your veterinarian how long you should give the medication and if you should continue to give it even after your pet seems back to normal.
- ▶ Ask your veterinarian what this drug is expected to do and how long it will take to know if it's working.
- ▶ Ask if a recheck appointment is necessary.

When should this drug 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.
- ▶ That are being treated with amitraz (Mitaban®).

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

- ▶ With lung disease. Rarely buprenorphine can depress breathing ability.
- ▶ That are old, weak, or frail.
- ▶ With hypothyroidism (low thyroid hormone), severe kidney disease, or adrenocortical insufficiency (Addison's disease).
- ▶ With head trauma or other serious central nervous system conditions (eg, coma).
- ▶ With severe liver disease.

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 the drug?

Side effects that usually are not serious include:

- ▶ Sedation (sleepiness, drowsiness).
- ▶ Vomiting (rare in cats).

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:

- ▶ Respiratory depression (rare). If your animal is having trouble breathing or stops breathing at times, contact your veterinarian immediately.

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

Overdoses of buprenorphine in animal patients are rarely life threatening, but they can cause significant problems so be sure that you are giving the exact amount your veterinarian has prescribed. 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 drug 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 squirted into the mouth of cats, squirt just under the cat's tongue or in the cheek pouch for the best effect. The doses are very small for this potent drug, so be sure that you are giving the exact amount your veterinarian has prescribed. Often your veterinarian will draw up the proper amount into syringes for you.
- ▶ If your veterinarian has instructed you to give this medication by injection under the skin (subcutaneously), be sure you understand the proper places and technique to give it.
- ▶ If you are giving these shots at home, place used needles and syringes in a sharps disposal container immediately after they have been used. Your veterinarian or pharmacist will help you obtain these containers. Be careful not to accidentally stick yourself; do not attempt to disconnect the needle from the syringe. Keep containers out of reach of children and pets. Once about ¾ full, dispose of containers according to your community guidelines. Check with your local trash removal services or health department (listed online and in the city or county government [blue] pages in your phone book) to see which disposal methods are available in your area.
- ▶ 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 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 my animal a dose of this medication?

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

How should I store this medication?

- ▶ Store this medication at room temperature. Do not allow the

injection liquid to freeze.

- ▶ 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?

- ▶ Certain flea collars and dips containing amitraz (an MAO inhibitor) should not be worn or used within 14 days of discontinuing buprenorphine as this combination may cause a dangerous rise in body temperature and blood pressure.
- ▶ Don't give other drugs for pain with buprenorphine unless your veterinarian has told you to.
- ▶ Buprenorphine is a controlled substance and should not be given to anyone other than the animal for whom it was prescribed. Prescriptions can only be refilled up to 5 times within 6 months of the original prescription date.
- ▶ 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.