

Diltiazem

(dil-tye-a-zem)

Category: Calcium Channel Blocker

Other Names for this Medication: Cardizem®, Cartia XT®, Matzim LA®, Tiazac®, Taztia XT®, Dilt-XR®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** 30 mg, 60 mg, 90 mg, & 120 mg tablets; 60 mg, 90 mg, 120 mg, 180 mg, 240 mg, 300 mg, 360 mg, & 420 mg extended/sustained release tablets & capsules.

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

- ▶ Diltiazem is used in dogs and cats to treat heart rhythm problems and in cats to treat some types of heart disease.
- ▶ Be sure your pet receives all doses; it is important to not skip any treatments.
- ▶ This drug may be given with or without 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.
- ▶ Common side effects include vomiting (cats), poor appetite, diarrhea, and a slower heart rate.
- ▶ Patient will need to be seen regularly by your veterinarian to monitor how well the medication is working. Do not miss these important follow-up visits.

How is this medication useful?

Diltiazem works on the heart by changing how calcium is used to treat heart rhythm problems in dogs and cats and some forms of feline heart disease.

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 allows veterinarians to prescribe 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 cause problems when taken with diltiazem. Be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you are giving your animal, as well as the amount and schedule of 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 did or didn't work.
- ▶ If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug. At high dosages, diltiazem has caused birth defects in rodents.
- ▶ 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 that:

- ▶ Have had an allergic reaction to it.
- ▶ Have low blood pressure.
- ▶ Have certain types of heart rhythm problems (eg, AV block, slow heart rate).

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

- ▶ Severe liver or kidney problems, as the drug is metabolized by the liver and eliminated from the body by the kidneys.
- ▶ Severe heart failure.

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:

- ▶ Slowed heart rate.
- ▶ Vomiting (cats).

You don't have to be overly concerned if you see either of these effects 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 include:

- ▶ Collapse (passing out)
- ▶ Severe weakness.
- ▶ Yellowing of skin, gums, or whites of the eyes (jaundice).
- ▶ Skin rash.

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

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

Diltiazem overdoses can be serious and can cause low blood pressure and a slow heart rate. If you witness or suspect an overdose of diltiazem in your animal, contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center for 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.

- ▶ There are many different forms of diltiazem available. Some are long-acting forms that can reduce the number of dosages that are needed each day.
- ▶ Dilacor® capsules contain a given amount of long acting tablets within the capsule. Your veterinarian or pharmacist will tell you how to open up the capsule and give the tablets within to your animal.
- ▶ Cardizem® capsules contain fixed proportions of long-acting versus immediate acting “beads” within the capsule. Your pharmacist or veterinarian will tell you how to open the capsules and measure the beads for the appropriate dose for your animal.
- ▶ If you are using a long-acting form, do not crush or split tablets unless your veterinarian or pharmacist instructs you to do so.
- ▶ Diltiazem may be given either with food or on an empty stomach. 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.
- ▶ 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 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 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 in the original child- and light-resistant prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature.
- ▶ 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?

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ While your pet is taking this medication, it is important to return to your veterinarian for follow-up visits to ensure your pet is tolerating the medication well.

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