

Carnitine

(*kar-ni-teen*)

Category: Nutritional Supplement

Other Names for this Medication: Carnitor®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** 250 mg & 330 mg tablets; 250 mg capsules; oral liquid in 100 mg/mL & 200 mg/mL (preservative-free) in 118 mL vials & ampules; may also be available in bulk powder form from local health food stores.

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 causes no side effects but when giving larger doses, vomiting or diarrhea can occur. Giving it with food may help.
- ▶ If using a powder form, mix into food.
- ▶ Use *only* L-carnitine. Do **NOT** to use any carnitine product that contains D-carnitine.

How is this medication useful?

Carnitine is an amino acid that is essential for normal heart function. It may be given as a nutritional supplement for dogs with heart disease when there is not enough carnitine in the diet. Carnitine may also help protect the heart from adverse effects of certain chemotherapy drugs and in treating toxicity caused by drugs used to prevent seizures. In cats, carnitine may be useful for fatty liver syndrome.

Carnitine is considered a nutritional supplement by the FDA; therefore, it does not evaluate these products for safety or efficacy. For your animal's safety, use only products recommended by your veterinarian. 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 carnitine. 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.
- ▶ Carnitine appears safe to use during pregnancy, but 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.

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.

Some products may contain both L-carnitine as well as another form of the drug, D-carnitine. Do **NOT** use products containing D-carnitine as this will block the effects of L-carnitine and your pet's condition may worsen. If in doubt, check with your veterinarian before giving it to your animal.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Side effects are not usually seen with carnitine use. Higher doses may cause vomiting and diarrhea. Giving carnitine with food may decrease stomach upset. You don't have to be overly concerned if you see either of these signs unless they are severe, worsen, or continue to be a problem. Contact your veterinarian if this happens.

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

Overdoses of carnitine usually do not cause harmful effects, but if your animal gets a large 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.

- ▶ Carnitine can be given with or without food, but it is usually given as a powder that is mixed into food.
- ▶ 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?

- ▶ Carnitine should be stored in a tight, light-resistant, child-proof container 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 leftover medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

- ▶ Carnitine may be expensive and difficult to find in pharmacies. If buying carnitine from other sources, such as a health food store or online, be sure the product does **NOT** contain D-carnitine.
- ▶ 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.