

Methylprednisolone

(meth-ill-pred-niss-oh-lone)

Category: Glucocorticoid

Other Names for this Medication: Medrol®, Depo-Medrol®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: Oral tablet: 4 mg. **Human:** Oral Tablets: 2 mg, 4 mg, 8 mg, 16 mg, & 32 mg. Injectable forms (both short- and long-acting) are available.

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

- ▶ Give oral products with food.
- ▶ The goal is to find the lowest dose possible and use for the shortest period of time.
- ▶ There are many side effects, especially when the drug is used long term. The most common ones seen after starting therapy include greater appetite, thirst, and need to urinate.
- ▶ In dogs, stomach or intestinal ulcers, perforation, or bleeding can occur. The risk for this occurring is increased if used with drugs like aspirin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (eg, carprofen), or other cortisone-like drugs (eg, prednisone). If your animal stops eating, develops a fever, black tarry stools or bloody vomit (looks like coffee grounds), contact your veterinarian immediately.
- ▶ Do not stop therapy without a veterinarian's guidance, as serious side effects could occur.

How is this medication useful?

In animals, methylprednisolone can be used as an anti-inflammatory drug, immunosuppressive drug, chemotherapy (cancer treatment), and to treat certain hormonal imbalances (eg, hypoadrenocorticism).

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved some methylprednisolone products for use in dogs, cats, and horses. The FDA does allow veterinarians to prescribe and use products containing this drug in different species and for other conditions. 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, including NSAIDs and aspirin, can interact with this drug, 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.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your animal 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 are receiving other drugs that can cause stomach ulcers, including aspirin or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) (eg, carprofen, deracoxib, flunixin, meloxicam).
- ▶ That are allergic to it and other related medications (eg, prednisone, dexamethasone)
- ▶ That have diabetes.
- ▶ That have stomach or intestinal ulcers.
- ▶ With untreated hormonal imbalances (eg, hyperadrenocorticism, diabetes mellitus).
- ▶ Recovering from surgery or when surgery is anticipated.

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

- ▶ With fungal infections.
- ▶ That have heart or kidney disease.
- ▶ That are pregnant.
- ▶ That have an infection.
- ▶ That are young and growing. Methylprednisolone can slow down growth when used for extended periods of time.

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?

Side effects that usually are not serious include:

- ▶ Greater appetite, thirst, and need to urinate.
- ▶ Vomiting or diarrhea.
- ▶ Mild behavioral changes.
- ▶ Excessive panting in dogs.
- ▶ After using the drug for several weeks or more: greater thirst, need to urinate, and appetite, weight gain, pot belly, skin or coat changes, hair loss, weakness; any of which may mean the dose is too high (too much cortisol).

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:

- ▶ Unwillingness to eat, high fever, black tarry stools, or bloody vomit (looks like coffee grounds); these may signal a stomach or intestinal ulcer developing.
- ▶ Weight loss despite having a voracious appetite could indicate the development of diabetes mellitus, which can happen with long-term use of this drug.
- ▶ Aggressive or threatening behaviors.
- ▶ Infection. When used at high dosages, methylprednisolone causes poor wound healing and makes your pet at risk for developing infections. Because this drug suppresses the immune system, you may not see a fever when there is a serious infection. The only indication of a problem may be a poor appetite, low energy level, or a non-healing wound.

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

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: **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661) and **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435); 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.

- ▶ Give oral products with food. This may help prevent vomiting after a dose and possibly prevent stomach ulcers.
- ▶ If given once daily, methylprednisolone is usually given in the morning to dogs and horses and in the evening to cats as this will more closely mimic their natural hormone cycles.
- ▶ Your veterinarian may prescribe a tapering dose of this medication. That is, higher doses are given early in therapy and the dose is then slowly reduced over time. If you have any questions on how much or how often to give this medication, consult with your veterinarian or pharmacist.
- ▶ 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 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 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.
- ▶ It is very important not to stop the drug abruptly if your animal has been on it for a while; serious side effects could occur.

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 this medication in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature and protected from light.
- ▶ 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?

- ▶ Your veterinarian will need to do regular examinations and blood testing to make sure your animal is tolerating the medication and make dosing adjustments as needed.
- ▶ Instead of an oral pill, some patients will be given an injection of a long acting form of methylprednisolone every few weeks at the veterinary clinic.
- ▶ If your animal has been on high doses of methylprednisolone or other immunosuppressive drugs, vaccinations may not be effective. Talk to your veterinarian about vaccinations while your animal is receiving the drug.
- ▶ If you are seeing a different veterinarian than normal, be sure to tell them your dog is taking this drug. Dogs that require surgery or are stressed from trauma or illness may require dosing changes. Also, methylprednisolone can affect some laboratory tests.
- ▶ 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.