

# Metronidazole Hydrochloride

## Metronidazole Benzoate

(*me-troe-ni-da-zole, hye-droe-klor-eyed, benz-oh-ate*)

**Category:** Antibiotic, Antiprotozoal

**Other Names for this Medication:** Flagyl®

**Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary:** None. **Human:** 250 mg, 500 mg, and 750 mg tablets; 375 mg capsules. Metronidazole benzoate (less bitter tasting) may be made (compounded) by compounding pharmacies. Topical gel and injectable formulations are also 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 this medication with food.
- ▶ This drug can cause nervous system side effects, especially when administered at higher doses. Tell your veterinarian about any changes in your animal's behavior or coordination.
- ▶ Do not give to pregnant or nursing animals.
- ▶ Banned for use in animals that are used for food (including egg laying chickens and dairy animals).

### How is this medication useful?

Metronidazole is an antibiotic that can treat or prevent some bacterial and protozoal (eg, *Giardia* spp) infections. 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 human products containing this drug in animals in certain situations. The FDA bans (it is illegal) using this drug in food animals. 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 possibly cause problems when taken with this medication. 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 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.

### 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.
- ▶ That are pregnant or nursing as it may cause birth defects or be harmful to nursing animals.
- ▶ That are to be used for food.

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

- ▶ That have liver problems; however, there are some liver conditions that will benefit from use of metronidazole.
- ▶ That are young (puppies and kittens).
- ▶ That are on blood thinners.

If your animal matches any of these, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks of using the medication versus the benefits that it might have.

### What are the side effects of this medication?

Side effects that usually are not serious include:

- ▶ Nausea, vomiting, regurgitation, drooling.
- ▶ Diarrhea or if treating diarrhea it worsens.
- ▶ Weakness or tiredness.
- ▶ Humans report a bad taste in the mouth while taking metronidazole.

If any of these are severe, worsen or continue to be a problem, contact your veterinarian.

### Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:

- ▶ Nervous system toxicity (staggering, difficulty walking, loss of coordination, head tilt, eye twitching, seizures). These side effects usually don't occur unless metronidazole is given at high doses or if it is given for a long time, but they can happen with lower doses at any time.
- ▶ Loss of appetite.
- ▶ Yellow color to the whites of the eyes or gums (jaundice).

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

**If my pet 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.

- ▶ The drug should be given with food.
- ▶ Liquid forms of this medication must be shaken well before use and measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring syringes.
- ▶ If you are having 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, so be sure you understand how long your veterinarian wants you to continue giving it. You may need to get prescription refills before the therapy will be complete.

**What should I do if I miss 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. Liquid formulations of metronidazole are usually stored in the refrigerator.
- ▶ Keep away from children and other animals.

**Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other pets?**

Pregnant women and people who are allergic to this drug should be very careful not to accidentally take it. Because this drug has a higher risk for causing birth defects, pregnant women should wear disposable gloves when giving doses or handling the drug and avoid inhaling any dust from split or crushed tablets. Skin or eyes exposed to powder or liquids containing the drug should immediately be washed or rinsed off thoroughly.

**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.

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