

Sulfasalazine

(sul-fa-sal-a-zeen)

Category: Sulfonamide-Salicylate Antibacterial; Immunosuppressive Agent

Other Names for this Medication: Azulfidine®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** Tablets: 500 mg; Delayed-Release Tablets: 500 mg (enteric coated).

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 with food. Dose is often increased until diarrhea is controlled and then reduced to the lowest effective dose.
- ▶ Monitor for dry-eye syndrome in dogs.
- ▶ Cats may be sensitive to this drug; be sure to report any concerns to your veterinarian.
- ▶ People allergic to sulfa drugs should handle this drug with caution.

How is this medication useful?

Sulfasalazine may be useful for the treatment of inflammatory colon (ie, large intestine) diseases in dogs, cats, and ferrets. It may also be tried as a treatment for vasculitis in dogs.

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 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 allergic to it, sulfonamides (sulfa drugs), or salicylates (eg, aspirin).
- ▶ That have dry-eye syndrome (ie, keratoconjunctivitis sicca).
- ▶ That are severely dehydrated, as they may develop blockages in the urinary tract caused by kidney or urinary bladder stones).
- ▶ With gastrointestinal or urinary tract obstructions.
- ▶ Doberman pinschers. This breed is very susceptible to developing a sulfonamide-related immune condition.

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

- ▶ Cats, which may be more sensitive to the aspirin-like component of the drug and have serious reactions (eg, anemia).
- ▶ Dog breeds (eg, Cocker spaniels, bulldogs, West Highland white terriers, Lhasa apsos, shih tzus) susceptible to dry-eye syndrome.
- ▶ Animals with liver, kidney, or blood problems.

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:

- ▶ Reduced appetite, vomiting; cats may be more likely than dogs to develop these effects.

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.

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

- ▶ Dry-eye syndrome. Some dogs will develop dry-eye from sulfa drugs. Signs of dry-eye include squinting, blinking more, eye-rubbing, and mucoid eye discharge.
- ▶ Lack of energy.
- ▶ Persistent vomiting, diarrhea, or lack of appetite.
- ▶ Pale gums.
- ▶ Severe skin rashes (rare).

Contact your veterinarian immediately if you see any of these effects.

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.

- ▶ Sulfasalazine should be given with food. Your veterinarian may gradually increase the dose until the diarrhea gets better, then gradually reduce it to the lowest dose needed.
- ▶ 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.

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?

- ▶ 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.