

Chloramphenicol

Chloromycetin[®], Amphicol[®], Duricol[®] and Viceton[®] are other names for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

- Chloramphenicol is an antibiotic used for a variety of infections. Rarely, it is very toxic to some humans and because of this, its use is forbidden in animals that will be used for human food.

Are There Conditions or Times When Its Use Might Cause More Harm Than Good?

- Chloramphenicol is banned for use in food-producing animals under penalty of law.
- Because chloramphenicol can cause blood problems, it should not be used in animals who are experiencing anemias or bleeding abnormalities.
- Chloramphenicol is eliminated from the body by the liver and should be avoided in patients who have liver failure. If it must be used, dosages must be adjusted.
- Chloramphenicol should be used with extreme caution, if at all, in baby animals. This drug can cause the blood vessels to fail to properly circulate blood resulting in lack of oxygen to vital organs. This drug is particularly dangerous when used in kittens.
- Because chloramphenicol is secreted in the milk, it should not be given to nursing mothers.
- Chloramphenicol should also not be used in breeding animals, and should not be used in pregnancy due to adverse effects on the bone marrow of the fetus.
- If your animal has any of the above conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks of using the medication versus the benefits that it might have.

What Side Effects Can Be Seen With Its Use?

- Although it is not as severe as the anemia caused in humans, the development of bone marrow depression is often reported in animals and is related to the size of the dose used.
- Many animals will also experience vomiting, diarrhea, lack of appetite, and depression.
- Chloramphenicol stays in cats bodies longer than any other species and they are therefore more likely to develop adverse effects.
- Chloramphenicol can also severely affect the elimination of other drugs from the body. You should tell your veterinarian about any drugs that your pet is currently taking. Chloramphenicol especially affects drugs used for epilepsy.
- Chloramphenicol can affect your pet's ability to respond properly to a vaccination. If your pet is taking chloramphenicol, all vaccinations should be postponed if possible.

How Should It Be Given?

- Chloramphenicol is very hazardous to some humans in that even very small amounts may cause death in 1 in 10,000 people exposed. You should always wear gloves when handling this drug and children and pregnant women should never handle this drug. If you grind up the tablets to make a powder, you should wear a mask to avoid inhaling this drug.
- The successful outcome of your animal's treatment with this medication depends upon your commitment and ability to administer it exactly as the veterinarian has prescribed. Please do not skip doses or stop giving the medication. If you have difficulty giving doses consult your veterinarian or pharmacist who can offer administration techniques or change the dosage form to a type of medication that may be more acceptable to you and your animal.
- If you miss a dose of this medication you should give it as soon as you remember it, but if it is within a few hours of the regularly scheduled dose, wait and give it at the regular time. Do not double a dose as this can be toxic to your pet.
- Some other drugs can interact with this medication so tell your veterinarian about any drugs or foods that you currently give your animal. Do not give new foods or medications without first asking your veterinarian.
- **Dogs and Cats:** Dogs and cats usually receive this drug orally as a tablet or liquid twice or three times daily.
- **Horses:** Horses usually receive this drug orally four times daily.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Chloramphenicol should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- This is an extremely bitter drug and most animals may not accept the drug if the original tablet or capsule is crushed or opened.
- Sunlight breaks down chloramphenicol, so if your pet eliminates outside, you should not be in danger. If your pet has an accident or vomits within 48 hours of a dose, put on gloves before cleaning up the accident and place all waste in a plastic bag and put in the outside trash can.
- Unused chloramphenicol should be returned to your veterinarian or pharmacist for proper disposal.