



Medicine series

Practice details

Codeine

- Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.
- Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.
- This medicine has been prescribed for your pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.

The medicine you have been given for your dog or cat is called codeine.

What is codeine?

Codeine is a prescription medication used to treat mild to moderate pain, it is also used as a cough-suppressant and to treat diarrhoea.

Why has my pet been prescribed codeine?

Your pet has been prescribed codeine as a treatment for chronic pain or for coughing.

How should I store codeine?

This medicine does not require special storage conditions. The tablets are fine to be stored at room temperature, away from light. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

How do I give codeine to my pet?

Codeine is available as tablets or a syrup formulation and is given via the mouth. Try to disguise the medication in a small quantity of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Codeine can also be gently squirted into the side of your pet's mouth or the tablets can be placed carefully on the back of your pet's tongue and their mouth closed until the entire dose has been swallowed.

How long will my pet need to take codeine?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients. It is important that you complete the course of treatment even if your pet seems to be well. If your pet is still unwell at the end of the course, then you should contact your vet as soon as possible.

What should I do if I run out of codeine?

Try to ensure that you have enough medication in advance of it running out. However, if you do run out, contact your own vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose, give the medication as soon as possible. However, it is best to skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your pet's next scheduled dose. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the total stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

Contact your vet immediately if your pet receives an overdose of codeine.

Can my pet take codeine if I am already giving them other drugs?

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications, even if you think they already know. This includes herbal or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop, pharmacy or health store.

What are the possible side effects of codeine for my pet?

Codeine can sometimes cause constipation, sedation, wobbliness on the legs and reduced breathing rate. If you are concerned about your pet at all, contact your vet.

What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking codeine?

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication or you feel they are excessively sedated, you should contact your vet as soon as possible for advice.

What should I do if a person accidentally takes this drug?

If a person accidentally takes your pet's medicine, they should contact their doctor **immediately**. This leaflet along with any remaining medication and its containers (even if they are empty) should be taken with them.

Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about this drug or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and further information on codeine.

The Prescribing Cascade

This medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

While the editors and the BSAVA have made every effort in preparing this information leaflet, the contents and any statements are made in good faith purely for general guidance and cannot be regarded as substitute for professional advice. The publishers, contributors and the BSAVA do not take responsibility for the information provided on this leaflet and hence do not accept any liability for loss or expense incurred (by you or persons that you disseminate the materials to) as a result of relying on content in this leaflet. To this end, you are advised to consult your vet and seek their professional advice before taking any steps set out in this leaflet. If you are a vet, you must not rely on the contents in this leaflet without independently verifying the correctness and veracity of the contents. BSAVA is not responsible for any alterations made to this document from the version supplied.