



Medicine series

Practice details

# Vitamin D

- 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 mimics the action of vitamin D. Such drugs include calcitriol (sometimes sold as Rocaltro®) and dihydrotachysterol (sometimes sold as AT 10®). However, there is a wide variety of drugs and trade names. This leaflet does not apply to forms of vitamin D that may be applied to the skin, such as creams or ointments intended for human use. If your doctor has prescribed such creams, then they should not be used on or given to your pet.

## What is vitamin D?

Vitamin D is a hormone that works in conjunction with other hormones (particularly parathyroid hormone) to regulate calcium balance in the body. Increasing vitamin D concentrations raises the amount of calcium in the blood. Inactive forms of vitamin D (cholecalciferol and vitamin D2) are present in many foods and the active hormone (vitamin D3) is made in the kidneys. Dogs and cats, unlike humans, cannot make the inactive forms of vitamin D in the skin and need it in their diet.

## Why has my pet been prescribed vitamin D?

Vitamin D is used to treat low calcium concentrations that are due to low parathyroid hormone levels. In cats, this most commonly occurs following surgery to remove a thyroid tumour (goitre) that was causing hyperthyroidism. In dogs, it usually occurs due to spontaneous inflammation of the parathyroid glands. Occasionally, vets will also prescribe vitamin D for patients with kidney failure. Calcium supplementation is usually needed but can be stopped after a while.

## How should I store vitamin D?

This medicine does not require special storage conditions. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

## How do I give vitamin D to my pet?

Vitamin D works better when given with food. Try to disguise the medication in a small quantity of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Alternatively, it can be placed carefully on the back of your pet's tongue and their mouth held closed until the entire dose has been swallowed. It is common at the start of vitamin D treatment to have to give calcium tablets also. The two medications can be given together or separately.

## How long will my pet need to take vitamin D?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. It is likely that your pet will need to take vitamin D for the rest of their life. The effect of vitamin D varies between patients and so the dose needs to be worked out specifically for your pet. It is important that your pet's calcium concentrations are checked

regularly when they are taking vitamin D. Do not stop giving your pet vitamin D, even if they seem well.

## What should I do if I run out of vitamin D?

Try not to run out. Make sure you order more vitamin D from your vet if your supply is getting low. 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 a dose is missed, 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 vitamin D. However, a single extra dose is unlikely to cause any significant problems.

## Can my pet take vitamin D 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. Drugs such as steroids (e.g. prednisolone, methylprednisolone, dexamethasone) and phenobarbital can negate the effect of vitamin D and so should not be given in combination with vitamin D. Other drugs, such as antacids, sucralfate and thiazide diuretics (e.g. hydrochlorothiazide) can cause high blood magnesium or calcium when given with vitamin D, so should also be avoided.

## What are the possible side effects of vitamin D for my pet?

Vitamin D can cause an excess of calcium in the blood, which can result in increased urination and thirst, and ultimately permanent

## 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.

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kidney damage. These side effects depend on the dose, length of treatment and the individual and may go away if treatment with vitamin D is stopped. If your pet shows any unusual symptoms, please contact your vet.

### **What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking vitamin D?**

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you should not give further doses and 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, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and *any* remaining tablets plus their container (even if it is empty) with you.

### **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 will know about vitamin D.