

## CLIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Updated: March 2020

# Digoxin

- 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 digoxin. It may have a trade name such as Lanoxin® or Lanoxin PG®, but often will just be called digoxin.

### What is digoxin?

Digoxin belongs to a group of medicines called *anti-arrhythmics*. Digoxin acts on the heart to slow down heart rate, particularly when there is an abnormal heart rhythm present such as atrial fibrillation. Digoxin also has a minor effect on heart muscle to increase the force of contraction, enabling the heart to pump more blood around the body.

### Why has my pet been prescribed digoxin?

Digoxin is used to help treat certain abnormalities of the heart rhythm in dogs and sometimes cats.

### How should I store digoxin?

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 digoxin tablets or elixir to my pet?

The easiest way to give the tablets or elixir is to disguise them in a small quantity of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Alternatively, the tablets can be placed carefully on the back of the pet's tongue and their mouth held closed until the entire tablet has been swallowed.

### How long will my pet need to take digoxin?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients, and may be for the rest of their life. Once your pet has been started on digoxin, your vet will need to run a blood sample 7–10 days later to check blood levels of the drug.

### What should I do if I run out of digoxin?

Try not to run out. Make sure you order more digoxin from your vet if your supply is getting low. If you do run out, contact your vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

### What should I do if I miss a dose?

If you do miss a dose, give your pet the dose they should have had **straight away**. Make sure that the next dose is separated by at least 6 hours before reverting back to the normal dosing time. **DO NOT** give double doses to make up for missed doses.

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

**Contact your vet immediately** as an overdose of digoxin can potentially be life-threatening.

### Can my pet take digoxin 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 or pharmacy. Digoxin should not be given to your pet if it is receiving chemotherapy or taking antacids (medicines used to reduce excess stomach acid), cimetidine or metoclopramide (a drug that stops vomiting). Your vet should discuss with you if they are planning on using digoxin in combination with other anti-arrhythmic drugs. Dose adjustment may be required if your pet is also taking certain antibiotics, diazepam (used to reduce anxiety and fits), diuretics (drugs often used in heart failure to reduce the build up of fluid) or other heart medication. If you have

any concerns about using digoxin with other medications, please ask your vet for further advice.

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

Cats are more likely than dogs to show side effects. These include vomiting, diarrhoea, lack of appetite, weakness and depression. Fainting may occur if the heart beat becomes more irregular. If your pet shows *any* unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet.

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

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you should not give any further doses and 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 or elixir 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 digoxin.

### 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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