

MEDICATIONS AND YOUR PET



3 Medications You Should Never Give Your Dog

Pets are a lot like kids. They depend on you for their safety – and you can never be too careful. Your most important job as a pet parent is to keep your pet healthy. So today, I want to give you some information about toxic medications that could potentially save your dog's life.

Just because a medication is safe for humans DOESN'T mean it's safe for dogs. I've seen cases where pet parents with the best intentions accidentally poisoned their dog with common over-the-counter medications because they didn't understand the dangers. That's why you should NEVER give your dog medication without first checking with your veterinarian.

Here are 3 common over-the-counter medications that you should NEVER give to your dog:

1. Aspirin – Aspirin interferes with platelets (which help the blood to clot). So if your dog has a wound or laceration, aspirin would make it harder to stop the bleeding. Aspirin is especially dangerous when mixed with other drugs, like steroids or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Dogs may experience gastrointestinal problems, respiratory difficulties, neurological problems, bleeding disorders and kidney failure.

2. Ibuprofen - This over-the-counter medication is a popular way to treat pain and inflammation in people – but for dogs, ibuprofen can easily exceed toxic levels. Well-intentioned owners may give their dog what they consider to be a "safe dose" – but it can easily lead to bleeding stomach ulcers and eventually kidney failure. And, if left untreated, this can be fatal. Symptoms include poor appetite, vomiting, black tarry stools, vomiting blood, abdominal pain, weakness and lethargy.

3. Acetaminophen - Medicating your dog with acetaminophen without consulting a veterinarian is dangerous. (Pets also consume tablets that are dropped on the floor or left around the house.) Dogs are less sensitive to acetaminophen than cats are. For example, a 50-pound dog would need to ingest more than seven 500 mg tablets to suffer toxic effects. For a cat, one 250 mg acetaminophen tablet could be fatal. If you suspect that your dog has ingested a toxic amount of acetaminophen (one pill or more), contact your family veterinarian or local veterinary emergency facility immediately. Common brands of acetaminophen include Tylenol®, Percocet® and aspirin-free Excedrin® among others.

So remember to keep all medications out of your dog's reach and NEVER give your dog any medication without first consulting your veterinarian. If you ever suspect that your dog has ingested any of these medications (in any amount), please contact your family veterinarian or local veterinary emergency facility immediately.

How to Administer Pill Medication to Your Dog

Frequently, medications are required for treatment for illness or injury and dogs are sent home with prescription medication. Once your dog is released from the veterinary hospital, administering these medications can be scary, confusing and, sometimes, difficult to do. With practice, giving pill form medications can be quick and easy.

Some medications can be hidden in a small amount of food such as marshmallows, peanut butter or cream cheese but you must make sure that the medication can be taken with food your dog actually swallows the medication. Some dogs will eat the food and spit out the pill. If hiding the pill in food is not working, try the following:

- Gently grasp your dog's head using your non-dominant hand. If you are right-handed, use your left hand. Place your hand on top of the muzzle with your thumb on one side and your fingers on the other. Avoid holding the lower jaw, and do not hold it so tight that it is uncomfortable or the dog cannot swallow. You may need someone to help hold the front legs and chest of the dog to hold him/her still. Wrapping the dog in a towel or blanket is a good restraint technique.
- Once his head is held in place, raise his nose to point toward the ceiling and firmly squeeze in just behind the upper canine teeth. The mouth should then open.

- Use your other hand to administer the pill. Place the pill between your thumb and forefinger. Use your little finger, ring finger or middle finger to lower the jaw by applying pressure to the teeth between the lower canine teeth.
- After the mouth is fully open, place the pill as far back in the mouth as possible. Avoid placing your hand too far into your dog's mouth. You may stimulate the "gag reflex" and this will make the experience unpleasant and make future medication administration attempts more difficult.
- Close your dog's mouth and hold it closed. Gently and briefly rub your dog's nose or blow lightly on the nose. This should stimulate him to swallow.
- The quicker you perform this procedure, the more cooperative your dog will be.
- Always remember to praise your dog and offer a treat after receiving medication. This will help make future medicine times easier.

How to Administer Liquid Medication to Your Dog

Once your dog is released from the veterinary hospital, administering home medications can be scary, confusing and, sometimes, difficult to do. Several medications are available in both liquid and pill forms. If you feel that the liquid form would be easier to give to your dog, make sure you ask your veterinarian if this option is available.

Try the following method for administering liquid medication to your dog:

- Draw up the prescribed amount of medication in the eyedropper or oral syringe.
- Gently grasp your dog's head; if you are right-handed, use your left hand. Place your hand on top of the muzzle with your thumb on one side and your fingers on the other. Avoid holding the lower jaw, and do not hold it so tight that it is uncomfortable or the dog cannot swallow. You may need someone to help hold the front legs and chest of the dog to hold him/her still. Wrapping their dog in a towel or blanket is a good restraint technique.
- Once his head is held in place, raise the nose to point toward the ceiling and firmly squeeze your fingers and thumb in just behind the upper canine teeth. The mouth should open.
- Place the tip of the eyedropper or syringe in the mouth just behind the long canine teeth in the area where there are either no teeth or small, flat teeth. Advance the eyedropper until it is just past the tooth line (jaw bone).
- Slowly administer the medication and be careful not to give it faster than your dog can swallow.
- Be prepared for some spitting of the medications. If this occurs, do not re-administer another dose unless you feel the entire dose of the medication has not been given.
- The quicker you perform this procedure, the more cooperative your dog will be.
- Always remember to praise your dog and maybe offer a treat after receiving the medication. This will help make future medicine times easier.

Most liquid medications come with an eyedropper attached to the lid. If the medication does not come with an eyedropper, using an individually purchased eyedropper or oral syringe will also work.

As a reminder:

1 ml = 1 cc

5 cc = 1 teaspoon

15 cc = 1 tablespoon

How to Administer Ear Medication to Your Dog

Frequently, your veterinarian prescribes medication after an ear examination. Administering these medications can be confusing and difficult. Some dogs, especially if their ears are painful, are resistant to the administration of medication. Diligence and patience are necessary and this technique may be helpful:

- Have the medication container ready and the cap off.
- Hold your dog's head still with one hand, while the other hand is used to administer the medication. Many people hold the tip of the affected ear to help hold the dog still. Be very careful to not hold the ear too firmly so that it causes pain. Be prepared for your dog to flinch once the medication touches the ear.
- Place the medication container just inside the opening to the ear. Do not push the container into the canal.
- Administer the prescribed amount of medication into the ear opening.
- Remove the container from the ear opening and gently rub the base of the ear to distribute the medication deeper inside the ear.

How to Administer Eye Medication to Your Dog

Frequently, your veterinarian prescribes medication for your dog after an eye examination. Administering these medications can sometimes be difficult. Some dogs, especially if their eyes are painful, are resistant to the administration of medication. Diligence and patience are necessary to help give the medication. There are several techniques that may facilitate giving eye medication (drops or ointment) to your pet.

Method 1

- Have someone restrain your dog by holding the front legs and chest, or if the dog is small, wrap him firmly in a blanket or towel.
- Place the medication in your dominant hand with the lid off.
- If you are right-handed and the right eye needs medication, rest your right hand on top of the head in order to stabilize your hand. Your hand should be near the inner side of the eye closest to the nose. With your left hand, place the thumb near the lower eyelid and the forefinger near the upper eyelid. This also works if you are left-handed and the dog needs medication in his left eye.
- If you are right-handed and the left eye needs medication, stand on the right side of the dog, facing the same direction as the dog. With the medication in your right hand, rest this hand on top of the head to stabilize. Reach across the dog and place the index finger of your left hand near the lower eyelid and your left thumb near the upper eyelid. This also works if you are left-handed and the right eye needs medication.
- Spread the eyelids apart using your thumb and forefinger.
- Apply the medication directly on the surface of the eye or into the small gap between the lower eyelid and the surface of the eye. Take care not to touch the surface of the eye with the tip of the medication container.
- Once the medication has been administered, open and close the eyelid one or two times with your thumb and forefinger in order to spread the medication over the entire surface of the eye.

Method 2

- If the eye medication is ointment, gently squeeze about 1/8" out the end of the tube. Hold the dog's head with your free hand, and with the other hand, touch the crease in the eyelids closest to the nose with the tube of medication. The spot to aim for is the point where the two eyelids meet. The dog will blink the exposed ointment off the tip of the tube.

- The third eyelid sits in this same area and will move upward when the corner of the eyelids is touched and will prevent the tube from touching the cornea.
- The same method can be used at the outside corner of the eyelids, but there is no third eyelid in this area, so you must be careful not to touch the cornea with the tube.
- After administering the ointment, wipe the tip of the tube with a fresh Kleenex or piece of cotton and replace the cap.

Method 3

- If the eye medication is a solution, and if your dog objects to having the medication dropped directly onto the surface of the eye or objects to having the eyelids opened, then simply hold the dog's head in an upward position and make him look towards the ceiling.
- Approach the eye with the bottle of medication, from either the front of the head or over the top of the back of the head. As the bottle gets closer to the eye, the dog often closes its eyes. Drop a single drop of medication onto the crease where the eyelids touch and come together.
- Continue to hold the head in an upward position for a full minute after the drop is applied to the crease. Gravity will cause the solution to ooze slowly downward through the small gap in the eyelids.
- With this method, some of the solution may be lost onto the skin around the eye, but the dog may tolerate this method better.

Following Administration of the Medications

Don't forget to praise your dog for his patience and good behavior. Give him a treat after the medication or some toy that will serve as a reward for cooperating with you.

How to Apply Topical Medication to Your Dog

Medications come in a variety of forms – pills, liquids and ointments. New flea and tick products are most commonly associated with topical application but other drugs are also available, such as antibiotic creams and ointments for wound care.

Some topical medications include an applicator for easy administration. For flea and tick products, once applied to the skin, the medication is absorbed by the skin, where it enters the bloodstream. From there, it is distributed throughout the body. Some, like antibiotic creams and ointments, are intended to work primarily at the site of injury, although a small amount does get absorbed into the system.

Administration of topical medication is quite simple but it requires your pet to remain still for a brief time. The medication needs to be placed in an area that the dog cannot lick. If the medication is intended to treat a wound, your pet may need an Elizabethan collar to prevent licking the wound and medication. For flea and tick treatments, the best recommendation is to place the medication on the skin between the shoulder blades.

Try the following method:

- 1) Hold the applicator upright and snap off the tip to allow the medication to flow out of the applicator.
- 2) Hold your dog still. Your dog can be standing, lying down or even sitting. Just make sure you have access to the necessary area.
- 3) For flea and tick products, read the instructions on the medication to determine if the manufacturers recommend applying in one area or multiple areas.
- 4) For wound treatment, follow your veterinarian's recommendation on the frequency of medicating the wound.
- 5) Place the tip of the applicator through the hair and place directly against the skin or against the wound.
- 6) Squeeze the applicator until all of the medication has flowed out of the applicator. Try to avoid application of the medication on the hair.