Cyproheptadine

*(sip-roe-**hep**-ta-deen)*
Category: Antihistamine; Anti-serotonin Agent
Other Names for this Medication: Periactin®
Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** 4 mg tablets; 2 mg/5 mL (0.4 mg/mL) oral syrup.

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This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication. It is to help answer commonly asked questions and help you give the medication safely and effectively to your animal. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

Key Information

- Cyproheptadine is an antihistamine that can also be used as an appetite stimulant or as a treatment for certain toxicities.
- Antihistamines should be used on a regular, ongoing basis in animals that respond to them. They work better if used before exposure to an allergen (eg, pollens).
- May be given with or without food. If your animal vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- May cause drowsiness (sleepiness); this effect may lessen with time.
- Cats can become overly excited when receiving this medication.

How is this medication useful?

Cyproheptadine has two main effects: blocking histamine and blocking serotonin. Cyproheptadine blocks histamine's effects and reduces itchiness associated with allergies. This drug is most commonly used in dogs and cats for its effects on serotonin release. Serotonin blockade can be useful as an appetite stimulant in cats as well as a treatment for serotonin syndrome in affected dogs and cats.

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in humans, but it is not officially approved for use in animals. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe products containing this drug in different species or for other conditions in certain situations. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this drug is the most appropriate choice.

What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?

Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.

- Other drugs can interact with cyproheptadine, so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.
- Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your animal may have now or has had in the past.
- If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian about the treatment and how well it did or didn't work.
- If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug.
- Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your animal has developed in the past.

When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug **SHOULD NOT** be used in patients with:

- A history of allergic reactions to it.
- Appointments for allergy testing. Antihistamines interfere with the results of allergy testing. Talk with your veterinarian about when to stop giving this medication.

This drug should be used **WITH CAUTION** in:

- Animals with glaucoma, which the drug may make worse.
- Older patients.
- Working dogs (eg, guide dogs, search dogs, hunting dogs, sled dogs, rescue dogs), which may become sleepy and unable to perform their duties while on this drug.
- Nursing mothers.
- Animals with problems urinating, prostate enlargement, thyroid problems, or heart disease.
- Animals with obstructions in the gastrointestinal tract.

If your animal has any of these conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Common but not serious side effects include:

- The most common side effect, which is often desirable, is sleepiness. Most animals will become tolerant to this effect with time and will not get as sleepy when given the medication.
- Dry mouth and trouble urinating (eg, straining) are possible but not common.
- Cats, in particular, may become unusually excited while taking this drug.
- Infrequently, cyproheptadine may cause gastrointestinal distress (eg, vomiting, decreased appetite, diarrhea).

You don't have to be overly concerned if you see any of these signs unless they are severe, worsen, or continue to be a problem. Contact your veterinarian if you have any concerns.

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If my pet gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?

Cyproheptadine overdoses are usually not serious; however, large overdoses may be serious. If you are unsure of the amount taken or if your animal has received an overdose of this drug and is showing signs such as excessive drowsiness, excitement, seizures, or severe dry mouth, contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center immediately for further advice. Animal poison control centers that are open 24 hours a day include **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435) and **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661); a consultation fee is charged for these services.

How should this medication be given?

For this medication to work, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. It's a good idea to always check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

- The drug may be given either with food or on an empty stomach. If your animal vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- Liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- This medication can be given for various lengths of time. Be sure you understand how long your veterinarian wants you to continue giving this medication. Prescription refills may be necessary before the therapy will be complete. Before stopping this medication, talk to your veterinarian, as there may be important reasons to continue its use.

What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?

If you are giving this drug twice a day, then give the next dose when it is usually time to do so. If you are giving this drug once daily, give it when you remember and then give it at the regular time the next day. Do not double-up doses or give an extra dose.

How should I store this medication?

- Store this medication in the original child-resistant prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature. Oral syrups can be stored at room temperature or in the refrigerator.
- Keep away from children and other animals.

Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other pets?

There are no specific precautions required when handling this medication unless you are allergic to it. Wash your hands after handling any medication.

How should I dispose of this medication if I don't use it all?

- Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug "take-back" program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix it with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- Do not save left over medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

- Because this drug can cause dry mouth, be sure your animal has access to fresh, clean water at all times.
- Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Check the rules for your animal's sport before entering it in a competition while you are giving it this medication.

If you have any other questions or concerns about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

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