

# Diazepam

Valium is another name for this medication.

## How Is This Medication Useful?

- Diazepam is used in animals as a sedative, for seizures, and to cause muscle relaxation.
- It is also used to cause bladder relaxation to allow urination. It has also been given as an antianxiety agent for behavior problems.
- Given as an injection, it has been used to stimulate appetite in cats.

## Are There Conditions or Times When Its Use Might Cause More Harm Than Good?

- Cats may rarely develop a fatal liver problem when given diazepam by mouth. It is not predictable which cats will have this reaction. If your cat already has liver problems, you should not give your cat diazepam orally.
- As diazepam is cleared from the body by the liver and kidneys, it should be used very carefully in pets with liver or kidney disease.
- The effects of sedation can be great with diazepam and it should be used cautiously in large or working dogs whose safety or performance may be affected by sedation.
- Diazepam has consistently caused birth defects and should only be used in pregnancy or nursing animals when this risk is acceptable.
- If your animal has any of the above conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks of using the medication versus the benefits that it might have.

## What Side Effects Can Be Seen With Its Use?

- The usual effects are drowsiness and sedation.
- Dogs will sometimes get unusually excited from diazepam instead of becoming sedated.
- Higher doses in any species can cause difficulty breathing.

## How Should It Be Given?

- The successful outcome of your animal's treatment with this medication depends upon your commitment and ability to administer it exactly as the veterinarian has prescribed. Please do not skip doses or stop giving the medication. If you have difficulty giving doses consult your veterinarian or pharmacist, who can offer administration techniques or change the dosage form to a type of medication that may be more acceptable to you and your animal.
- Some other drugs can interact with this medication, so tell your veterinarian about any drugs or foods that you currently give your animal. Do not give new foods or medications without first asking your veterinarian.
- If you miss a dose of this medication you should give it as soon as you remember it, but if it is within a few hours of the regularly scheduled dose, wait and give it at the regular time. Do not double a dose as this can be toxic to your pet.
- Dogs and Cats: Dogs and cats usually receive this medication once or twice daily by mouth.
- If your veterinarian decides to use diazepam by mouth in your cat, you should watch the cat for any signs of the potentially fatal liver problem that oral diazepam can cause. If your cat stops eating or acts depressed, you should stop giving the diazepam and notify your veterinarian immediately.
- Sometimes your veterinarian will prescribe a solution of diazepam that is inserted into the animal's rectum during a bad seizure. Make sure your veterinarian demonstrates this technique for you so that you will know how to do it if the need arises.

## What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Diazepam should be protected from light and moisture and stored at room temperature. Diazepam solutions should not be stored in plastic and should not be mixed with any other drugs.
- Diazepam is a controlled substance and you will need to get a new prescription every 6 months if your pet is on long term therapy.
- You should not give diazepam to any other pets or household members.