

Specialist Referral Service
Willows Information Sheets

Can I give human painkillers to my pet?





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The short answer is NO! You should never attempt to treat your pets with human medication, and you should take precautions to keep household medications out of your pet's reach to avoid a potentially harmful or fatal reaction.

Unfortunately, it is common for people to make an assumption that a medication which is safe for people will also be safe for pets. As a result, a number of animals are poisoned every year when their owners attempt to give them treatment for pain without consulting their vet. Dogs and cats are also often exposed to human painkillers accidentally.

Can a human painkiller kill my pet?

YES! Every species is different and what is safe for humans can be fatal to a dog or cat. ***Never administer human medications to your pet unless instructed to do so by your veterinary surgeon.*** In addition, even painkillers used in animals are not necessarily safe for all species of animal, and you should not attempt to use a painkiller in one species, such as a cat, because you know you can use it in another e.g. a dog.

Can I give ibuprofen to my pet?

Ibuprofen (Nurofen) and naproxen are common and effective medications used to treat inflammation and pain in humans, but **they should not be given to pets**. These drugs can be toxic (poisonous) to dogs and cats, although cats are much more susceptible to this toxicity than dogs. A single 200 milligram ibuprofen tablet can be toxic to a cat or a small dog. Toxic effects can occur rapidly and damage the kidneys and stomach.

Do not give ibuprofen to your dog or cat under any circumstances!

My dog/cat has eaten ibuprofen – what should I do?

If you suspect your dog or cat has been given ibuprofen or has eaten it by accident, you should contact your veterinary surgeon immediately. Signs of a toxic reaction include:

- Vomiting
- Weakness
- Lethargy
- Lack of appetite
- Black, tarry faeces

Is aspirin safe for my pet?

Giving too large a dose of aspirin may be toxic to your pet. If given without food, aspirin can cause ulcers in the stomach. An adult aspirin, which is 320 mg, would be toxic for a 5 kilogram dog. Aspirin is not tolerated by young dogs, since they lack the enzymes necessary to process the aspirin in their body. The same is true for most cats.

Do not give aspirin to your puppy or to your cat!

I heard paracetamol is the safest painkiller – can I give it to my pet?

Paracetamol is a very popular painkiller in humans but it can be toxic or fatal in small animals. Dogs are less sensitive to paracetamol than cats. A 20 kilogram dog would need to ingest over seven 500mg tablets in order to suffer toxic effects. In cats, one 250mg paracetamol tablet could be fatal. Cats are at much greater risk of toxicity than dogs because they lack certain proteins necessary for the liver to safely metabolise or process paracetamol. Paracetamol causes severe damage to the liver and red blood cells.

Do not give paracetamol to your cat under any circumstances!

My dog has been prescribed paracetamol – shall I give it?

Paracetamol has been formulated for use in humans, but there is a formulation for dogs, and your veterinary surgeon may decide to prescribe it under some circumstances. Your veterinary surgeon may prescribe a specific dosage of paracetamol for your dog. Be sure to follow your vet's dosage very carefully and report any problems such as vomiting, difficulty breathing, drooling, dullness or a painful tummy.

Because cats are extremely sensitive to its toxic effects, paracetamol must not be given to cats under any circumstances.

How to avoid a tragedy

Never give human medications to your pet unless specially directed to do so by your vet. There are other drugs that have similar beneficial effects but which are safe for your pet and licensed for use in animals. It is important to seek the advice of your vet if you think your pet is in pain, and to follow their instructions carefully.

Keep all medications in a secure place, out of reach of your pet.

If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).

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