

BUYING MEDICATIONS FOR YOUR PET AT A HUMAN PHARMACY



Many medications used in pets are used in people too. We often fill patient prescriptions to our clients' human pharmacies or dispense written prescriptions. Although this usually works well there are some things you should be aware of.

Sometimes it's actually less expensive to get the medications from us. Pharmacies use certain common medications as loss leaders, pricing them below cost to get you to come into their store. Medications that are not loss leaders are often less expensive from us because they are marked up much higher in the pharmacy to make up for the low pricing on the loss leader drugs.

Manufacturer coupons and rebates that we supply also can bring costs down.

You can order many medications via our website pharmacy, often less expensively than in our office, and have them shipped to you. It's still coming from us, so you know it's quality product.

We often have flavored or chewable formulations that are accepted better by pets than ones made for humans.

Pet medications come in the correct sizes for pets. Human pills often contain way too much medication for small dogs or cats.

You will always get a medication information sheet from us for any new prescription, listing side effects and cautions. You won't get this information from a pharmacist and humans can have very different reactions from animals for a given drug. We almost always want to dispense an initial prescription from us so we can give you the correct instructions, follow-up to ensure there are no side effects and make you aware of what the drug should look like. Medication mistakes are often discovered because the pills in the new refill don't look like the previous ones. This is a good safety check.

If we are handling the refills we will also handle the follow-up. We will be able to tell if you are refilling your pet's medications or giving it improperly and we can call, e-mail or text you when you should be running out of pills. Many people take the first vial home and then never refill the medication, whether it's for themselves or a pet.

When it's inconvenient to make another stop to pick up medications people often don't do it. When we dispense it we know you actually have it.

We don't always know whether a particular medication is readily available in a pharmacy or not. If we leave a prescription on an automated message system or fax it over and the pharmacy doesn't have it you may be out of luck when you go to pick it up.

Over 200 human and veterinary drugs are currently unavailable due to shortages of raw materials, manufacturing problems or facility closures. It can be very difficult to keep

track of it all and for hard-to-come-by drugs you may be running all over town trying to find a pharmacy that has what you need. We usually know what is in short supply and we will let you know if we can't get a medication or need to substitute something else, hopefully before you are left high and dry without it.

Most importantly of all, pharmacists are only trained in one species of animal – people. They have no idea how different species are from one another and how important it is to fill exactly what the veterinarian has prescribed. We are hearing more and more horror stories of prescription mistakes because more pharmacies are trying to attract veterinary clients and they don't have any training in pharmacology for pets.

For example:

- Human thyroid dosages are much lower than for dogs. When we prescribe 0.6 mg tablets of thyroid supplement, for example, it's not a typo, it's the correct size for large dogs.
- Tramadol dosages are also higher in dogs. Your pharmacist may tell you that you are overdosing your dog. The amount he or she will tell you to give won't make a dent in your dog's pain.
- Cats, on the other hand, often need tiny dosages at longer intervals. Humans take aspirin every 4 hours, dogs every 12 hours and cats every 72 hours. Liver function is different in different species and the liver is responsible for processing medications in the body. Many human drugs, such as Tylenol, are deadly to cats. Don't chance getting the wrong thing at the wrong dose and killing your pet, and be especially cautious with cats.
- NSAID drugs are especially problematic. Carprofen is very safe in dogs but ibuprofen can cause a bleeding gastric ulcer after only 2-3 days of use. It's not OK to substitute a human product for a dog one - or for a pharmacist to switch medications without a doctor's authorization for any reason, for that matter.
- Humilin N insulin is not the same as Glargine insulin in a diabetic cat, you can't just substitute one for the other. Switching types of insulin is very dangerous unless it's done purposely with dosage adjustments and intensive blood sugar monitoring.
- Prednisone doesn't work very well in cats but prednisolone does. If a pharmacy doesn't carry one drug they may try to substitute something else that in humans would be equivalent. You might not even know they did that. Again, substitutions can be fatal!

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