Plumb's Drug Handouts

Cephalexin

(*sef-a-**lex**-in*)

Key Information

- Cephalexin is an antibiotic that treats bacterial infections.
- Give with or without food. Giving with food may help prevent stomach upset.
- Hiding tablets or capsules in food may help cover the unpleasant odor of this medication.
- Common side effects include vomiting, diarrhea, and decreased appetite.
- It is important to finish the entire course of treatment, even if your animal starts feeling better.

Note: The purpose of this information sheet is to answer commonly asked questions. It does not contain all available information for this medication and is not a substitute for medical advice provided by your veterinary healthcare team.

Description	• Cephalosporin antibiotic • Available as tablets, chewable tablets, capsules, and oral suspensions
Other common names	*Keflex*, *Rilexine* *
Uses	FDA-approved uses in animals: • Bacterial skin infections in dogs At the discretion of your veterinarian, this medication may be used in different species or for other reasons (extra-label use), such as: • Other bacterial infections in dogs and cats , such as urinary tract infections
Before this medication is given	No medication is 100% safe in all patients. Discuss with your veterinarian: • Any other medications or supplements your animal is taking • Any conditions or diseases your animal currently has or has had in the past • Any side effects your animal has had to medications in the past • The risks of using this medication if your animal is pregnant or nursing
Warnings for animals	Do **not** use: • In animals that are allergic to it or other cephalosporins • In rabbits, guinea pigs, rodents, or other pocket pets. Cephalexin can be harmful or fatal in these animals. Use with **caution** in animals that: • Are allergic to penicillin antibiotics • Have kidney disease Certain medications are not allowed in some animal competitions. Check rules and regulations when your animal is taking a medication.
Warnings for humans	• Wash your hands after handling any medication. • Wear gloves or avoid handling if you are allergic to penicillin or cephalosporin antibiotics.
How do I give this medication?	• Give with or without food. Giving with food may help prevent stomach upset. • Hiding tablets or capsules in food may help cover the unpleasant odor of this medication. • Shake liquids well before each dose. • For liquid medications, measure with an oral syringe, medicine cup, or dosing spoon. Do not use household measuring devices. *Give exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. Always follow the instructions on the prescription label.*

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Side effects	**Common** – contact your veterinarian if any of these signs are severe, continue to occur, or worsen over time: • Vomiting, diarrhea, or decreased appetite • Drowsiness or excitability **Severe** – stop the medication and contact your veterinarian immediately if you notice any of these signs: • Complete loss of appetite in cats • Fever, rashes, itching, trouble breathing, or pale gums
How will I know it's working?	• Your animal should start feeling better within 1 to 2 days. *Contact your veterinary clinic if your animal's signs worsen or do not improve.*
How long will the medication effects last?	• This medication will stop working within 24 hours of the last dose. • It may last longer if your animal has reduced kidney function.
How long do I give it for?	This medication can be given for different lengths of time. Give it for as long as your veterinarian tells you. You may need to refill the prescription.
Overdose	If you witness or suspect an overdose, call your veterinarian or an animal-specific poison control center (consultation fee applies): • **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center**: (888) 426-4435 • **Pet Poison Helpline**: (855) 764-7661 *Have the product or label with you if possible.*

Missed dose	In most cases, if you miss a dose:
	• Give it when you remember, then return to the regular dosing schedule.
	• If it is close to the time for the next dose:
	  - Skip the missed dose.
	  - Give the next dose at the next scheduled time.
	  - Continue the regular dosing schedule.
	If you are unsure, call your veterinary clinic. Do not double-up doses or give extra doses.

Storage	• Store tablets, chewable tablets, and capsules at room temperature. • Store unmixed powders at room temperature. Refrigerate after mixing with water. • Keep out of reach of children and animals. - The chewable forms of this medication are meant to be appealing to animals. Secure storage well out of reac h is important to prevent accidental overdose.
Disposal	Liquid forms should be thrown away 14 days after mixing with water. Do **not** flush this medication down the toilet or wash down the sink. Options for disposing of unused or expired medications include: • Drug take-back sites: This is preferred whenever possible. To find a site near you, contact your local law enforcement or waste management authorities. • Home disposal: Mix the medication in with coffee grounds or kitty litter, seal the mixture in a plastic bag, and throw it away in the trash. *Do **not** save leftover medication or give it to others to use.*
Questions?	Talk to your veterinarian.

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