

Amlodipine

Amlodipine has been added to your pet's therapy. Amlodipine (brand name: Norvasc®) is a long-acting vasodilator, that is, a drug that lowers blood pressure by dilating blood vessels. Use of amlodipine once a day is an effective way to lower blood pressure. Amlodipine may be used to treat systemic hypertension (high blood pressure), or may be used as part of the therapy of congestive heart failure.

The cause of hypertension in dogs and cats is different from that in most people. In people, hypertension often runs in families, or may be caused or aggravated by other factors such as diet or the presence of diabetes mellitus. In dogs and cats, hypertension is usually secondary to kidney or endocrine diseases (like hyperthyroidism or hyperadrenocorticism). Signs of high blood pressure in dogs and cats includes bleeding in the eyes or detachment of the retina(s), worsening kidney failure or neurologic signs such as seizures, changes in personality or dullness. Systemic hypertension is treated by treating the underlying disease. If therapy of the underlying disease does not reduce blood pressure to normal levels, your veterinarian may lower the blood pressure directly with medications such as amlodipine.

Amlodipine typically does not have many side effects, but should not be used if another calcium channel-blocking drug (for example, diltiazem) is in use. Side effects that may be seen with use of amlodipine may include weakness (if blood pressure is too low), or kidney failure and elevated blood potassium levels (if blood pressure in the kidney is too low). Kidney failure and high blood potassium do not occur very often and are usually reversible, but must be diagnosed early. If your pet is receiving any antihypertensive drugs, watch him or her for signs of weakness: lethargy, increased heart rate, listlessness or inability to rise. Signs of deteriorating kidney function include loss of appetite and/or vomiting. If these signs occur, please call your veterinarian immediately. Occasionally dogs will develop abnormalities in their oral gingiva (gums) with amlodipine therapy. This may look like bumpy or thickened gum tissue. If this occurs, please call your veterinarian for evaluation.

Your veterinarian may request that you return with your pet approximately 7 days after beginning therapy with amlodipine to recheck the blood pressure. If the pressure is not completely under control, your veterinarian may increase the dose.

The best way to treat problems due to cardiac medications is to prevent them or to "catch" the problem early. Please call your pet's consulting veterinarian or cardiologist if you have any questions or problems with your pet's cardiac therapy.