Ketoconazole

Nizoral® is another name for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

- Ketoconazole is used to treat serious fungus infections in animals.
- Because it has a side effect of suppressing the adrenal glands, ketoconazole may also be used in treating Cushing's Disease in dogs.
- Ketoconazole may also slow down the elimination of certain expensive drugs (e.g., cyclosporine) from the body and may be given with these drugs to decrease the cost of long-term expensive drug therapy.
- It has also been used topically on the feet of horses with white line disease that have not responded to other therapies.

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

- Ketoconazole should not be used in animals that have a history of being allergic to it or any other of the antifungal agents like it.
- Because ketoconazole can cause damage to the liver, and because the liver is responsible for removing ketoconazole from the body, it should not be used in patients who have liver disease. If your pet stops eating, becomes lethargic (lacking energy) or looks yellow around its gums and whites of its eyes, you should contact your veterinarian immediately.
- Ketoconazole requires an adequate amount of stomach acid for dissolution and absorption into the blood. It should not be given on an empty stomach and must be given with food. Animals that are on antacids or that are not making enough stomach acid should not receive ketoconazole orally as it will not be effective. If an animal must receive these drugs, they should not be given until 2 hours after ketoconazole is given.
- Ketoconazole has caused birth defects in laboratory animals. It should probably not be used in pregnant animals unless it will save the life of the mother. Ketoconazole does get into milk in high levels and should not be given to nursing mothers.
- Ketoconazole can stop sperm production and should not be used in male animals intended for breeding.
- The effectiveness of ketoconazole may be stopped by some other drugs. Please tell your veterinarian about all drugs that your animal is taking.

- If your animal has any of the previous 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?

- Loss of appetite is the most common side effect seen in dogs and can be accompanied with stomach upset, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Damage to the liver is also reported in many dogs taking ketoconazole. This damage may be reversible if the drug is stopped soon enough.
- Some animals will experience a lightening of fur color that returns to normal when the drug is stopped.
- Ketoconazole can suppress the adrenal glands and cause symptoms of Addison's disease. Some dogs may need to have prednisone administered during treatment because of this effect.
- Cats generally suffer from loss of appetite, weight loss and vomiting following treatment with ketoconazole. Liver toxicity is also possible and increases in liver function tests may indicate that the drug is causing liver problems. This usually goes away after the drug is stopped.

How Should It Be Given?

- Ketoconazole should be given with food orally once to twice daily. Giving the drug with a fatty food such as butter, milk or cheese will ensure that enough drug gets into the bloodstream.
- Antacids should not be given during ketoconazole administration, as they will prevent absorption of the drug.
- 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.
- 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.

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How Should It Be Given? (continued from previous page)

- 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.
- **Dogs and Cats**: Dogs and cats usually receive this drug orally once or twice daily. It should be given with food, preferably a fatty meal.
- **Horses**: Horses generally do not receive this medication, but when used, it is given orally once or twice daily. It may also be used topically on the feet of horses with white line disease.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Ketoconazole should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- When using the topical cream, the owner should wear gloves and wash hands after use.