Digoxin (Lanoxin)

Common Drug Name
Digoxin, Digitek

Common Brand Names
Lanoxin (human form)

Generic products are available.

Storage
Store at room temperature in tight, light resistant, childproof containers.

Uses
Used in dogs, cats, ferrets, hamsters, and birds to treat heart diseases, such as congestive heart failure, certain types of heart rhythm disorders, and sometimes, dilated cardiomyopathy.

Dose and Administration
Always follow the dosage instructions provided by your veterinarian. If you have difficulty giving the medication, contact your veterinarian.

Starting doses are often lower, and gradually increased to a maintenance dose based on blood levels and effects. Carefully follow your veterinarian’s directions as to dosage and the need to monitor signs and check blood levels.

Cats: Do not give with food; absorption may be decreased by as much as 50%.

If you miss a dose, give it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the one you missed and go back to the regular schedule. Do not give 2 doses at once.

This medication should only be given to the pet for whom it was prescribed.

Possible Side Effects
May see vomiting, diarrhea, depression, incoordination, loss of appetite, weight loss, weakness, and abnormal heart rhythms.

Consult with your veterinarian immediately if you see any of these signs or if your pet’s heart condition appears to worsen.

If your pet experiences an allergic reaction to the medication, signs may include facial swelling, hives, scratching, sudden onset of diarrhea, vomiting, shock, seizures, pale gums, cold limbs, or coma. If you observe any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Precautions
There is only a very small difference between the dose for treatment and a dose that could cause severe side effects and death. Do not adjust the medication amount without consulting with your veterinarian.

Potential complications include fatal abnormal heart rhythms and kidney failure.

Differences exist between brands and forms of the drug. Digoxin is better absorbed in the elixir and capsule forms than in the tablet form. Do not change brands or forms if possible. If there is a need to change, your veterinarian may need to monitor closely, recheck levels, and adjust the dose if indicated.

Do not use in breeding, pregnant, or lactating animals (female animals nursing their young); the safety of the drug has not been determined in these animals.

Do not use in animals with ventricular fibrillation, digitalis overdose, and certain other heart/lung conditions.

Use with caution in animals who are obese; have thyroid, kidney, or severe lung disease; or electrolyte abnormalities (e.g., abnormally low or high levels of potassium, sodium, or calcium in the blood).

Use with caution in Collies and other herding breeds, since they are more sensitive to some of the effects.

Cats: Cats are more sensitive to some side effects.

Consult with your veterinarian regarding the physical examinations and laboratory testing necessary prior to and during treatment with digoxin.

Drug, Food, and Test Interactions
Consult your veterinarian before using digoxin with any other medications, including vitamins and supplements, antacids, cimetidine, metoclopramide, oral neomycin, penicillamine, chemotherapy drugs, diuretics (furosemide, Lasix), amphotericin B, corticosteroids (prednisone, dexamethasone), laxatives, diazepam (Valium), quinidine, anticholinergic drugs (atropine), verapamil (another heart medication), tetracycline, erythromycin, and thyroid replacement therapy (thyroxine, Soloxine), since interactions may occur.

Signs of Toxicity/Overdose
May see the same signs as side effects: decreased appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, depression, incoordination, and weakness, as well as changes in urination.

High levels of digoxin can produce the side effects mentioned above, or the same signs as worsening of the heart condition.

If you know or suspect your pet has had an overdose, or if you observe any of these signs in your pet, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Keep this and all other medications out of the reach of children and pets.