Your veterinarian may honor a request to have your pet’s prescriptions filled at a traditional or online pharmacy. The veterinarian’s primary concern is for the safety and wellness of your pet. As such, it is essential that the communication between you, your veterinarian and the pharmacist of your choosing is thorough. Veterinarians have extensive education in animal medications and are best qualified to prescribe the correct medication, in the correct form and at the proper dosage.

A pharmacist is an important part of human healthcare and is extensively educated in human medication, but most do not have specialized training in animal medications. There are important differences between pets and people in terms of dosages, potential side effects and reasons for the use of various medications. It is important that your veterinarian is involved in all decisions regarding your pet’s medications.

How you can promote medication safety for your pet:

- Keep the medication in the original labeled containers to ensure you are giving the proper dose at the correct intervals.
- Do not give human medications to your pets unless directed by your veterinarian.
- Keep a list of all medications your animal is taking — including over-the-counter products, supplements, and prescription drugs — and share it with your veterinarian. It is important that your veterinarian review all medications and evaluate them for safety.
- When picking up a medication from a pharmacy, know the details of what was prescribed. If the medication is not what you expected, be sure to convey this to the pharmacist before leaving the pharmacy. Due to legal restrictions, a pharmacy may not be able to accept returned prescription drugs or provide a refund.
- A pharmacist is legally required to obtain permission from your veterinarian before modifying a prescription in any way. This includes changing a medication from a brand name to a generic product or adjusting the dosage.
- The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy developed the Vet-VIPPS program to ensure that Internet pharmacies selling veterinary drugs are properly licensed and meet other requirements. Further information on this program is available via the OVMA website at www.ohiovma.org/petmeds. An animal and human drugs from other countries are not approved for use in the United States and are discouraged.
- You can verify whether an Internet pharmacy is licensed by Ohio online at www.license.ohio.gov. Click on “License Lookup” and then select “Pharmacy Board” from the board selection drop-down menu. Type in the business name and click “Search” to find out if the company is licensed.

Discuss your pet’s medications with your veterinarian.

Your veterinarian is the best medical professional to assess your pet’s medical needs and to answer any questions you have regarding medications prescribed for your pet. Here are a few questions you may want to ask your veterinarian when discussing animal medications.

- What is the name of the medication, and what is its purpose?
- How much medication should be given and how often?
- How and where should the medication be stored?
- Should the medication be given with food, or before or after meals?
- What if I miss a dose?
- Should all the medication be given, even if the pet seems better?
- What side effects should I watch for?
Some drugs can be used in both humans and animals. However, the dosage, administration and use can vary greatly. Some common over-the-counter human drugs can be fatal to animals, and even animal medications can have different effects in different species, including:

- **Acetaminophen (Tylenol)** – Although this medication is useful in controlling pain in humans, it is fatal to cats and can be dangerous for dogs at certain doses.

- **Antihistamines** – Some over-the-counter antihistamines can be useful for treating itching and other allergic reactions. However, be sure the product does not contain pseudoephedrine, which can cause hyperactivity and other serious reactions, including death, in dogs. One way to make sure an antihistamine is free of pseudoephedrine is to avoid anything with “–D” following the name — like Claritin-D or Allegra-D. The “–D” often indicates the presence of pseudoephedrine.

- **Flea and Tick Medications** – Veterinary products developed for treating fleas and ticks should only be used for the specified animal. Some flea and tick medications for dogs can be toxic to cats; others used for dogs and cats can be fatal for rabbits.

- **Ibuprofen** – This non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) should never be given to dogs or cats. It can cause severe gastric ulcers or acute kidney failure. Drugs like Rimadyl, Deramaxx, Metacam and Previcox are veterinary-prescribed NSAIDs approved by the FDA for use in animals.

- **Insulin** – Many, but not all, formulations of insulin can be used for animals. Although a generic drug can be less expensive, substitutions should not be made without consulting a veterinarian.

- **Phenobarbital** – This drug is commonly prescribed to dogs with seizure disorders at a higher dose than for humans. Because of the serious nature of seizure disorders, it is essential that this medication is filled exactly as prescribed.

- **Thyroid Hormone** – Human doses of thyroid medications are much lower than what is needed for dogs. If your pharmacist questions the dosage, encourage them to contact your veterinarian to ensure the appropriate dose is dispensed.

- **Xylitol** – This natural sugar sweetener found in some liquid medications, chewing gum and candy is toxic to dogs.

### Important Differences Between Veterinary and Human Use of Medications

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**Additional Resources**

The following materials provide accurate information regarding purchasing pet medications from online pharmacies. To access them, visit the OVMA website at www.ohiovma.org/petmeds. If you have additional questions, please consult your veterinarian.

- The FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine: Purchasing Pet Drugs Online: Buyer Beware — This quick, two-minute video illustrates important considerations when choosing an online pharmacy.

- The FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine: Online Pet Pharmacies brochure

- Frequently Asked Questions by Pet Owners about Prescriptions and Pharmacies — The American Veterinary Medical Association has compiled a list of common questions regarding animal prescriptions and pharmacies.