

Pain medication (NSAIDs) and your cat

A 'painkiller' known as a 'non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug' (or NSAID) has been prescribed for your cat. These drugs are commonly used in humans and animals to help relieve pain, fever and inflammation – most commonly associated with degenerative joint disease (arthritis). Controlling your cat's pain is crucial for its welfare. Many cats greatly benefit from these drugs, having better mobility, less pain, increased appetite and an improved quality of life.

Degenerative joint disease (DJD) in cats

Degenerative joint disease is common, especially in older cats. As with other conditions, cats may mask the signs of this disease.

Problems and behavior changes in cats with DJD include:

- ➔ **Decreased activity** – eg, sleeping more, not moving around as much, playing or hunting less
- ➔ **Decreased mobility** – eg, reduced willingness to jump, not jumping as high, difficulty using the litter tray, stiffness, and sometimes obvious lameness
- ➔ **Decreased grooming** – reduced time or difficulty grooming, a poor coat, overgrown claws
- ➔ **Altered personality** – less keen to interact with people or pets, seeking solitude, 'grumpier'
- ➔ **Other signs** – may include aggression or vocalization when touched and loss of appetite

Understanding these changes helps alert you and your vet to the possible existence of pain and DJD, and will help you monitor whether therapy is helpful or not.

Are NSAIDs safe in cats?

NSAIDs play a vital role in therapy for many cats, but differences between cats and other animals mean you should **only ever** use a drug that has been specifically prescribed for **your cat** by **your veterinarian**. Many human drugs such as aspirin, ibuprofen and paracetamol/acetaminophen can be highly toxic to cats – administering these is life-threatening.

Adverse effects can be seen with NSAIDs, just as with all drugs. Some patients may be at increased risk of adverse effects (eg, older cats and cats with certain other diseases). Your veterinarian may then recommend **increased monitoring** and careful **adjustment of therapy** to find the **lowest effective dose** of the drug for your cat.



What adverse effects should I look out for?

Licensed NSAIDs have been shown to be safe for use in cats. However, adverse effects can still occur. Most are mild, but some can be serious – as in other species they may involve the gastrointestinal tract, kidneys, cardiovascular system or liver. Adverse effects may lead to a number of signs including:

- ➔ Loss of appetite
- ➔ Nausea or vomiting
- ➔ Lethargy and dullness/depression
- ➔ Altered thirst and/or urination
- ➔ Diarrhea and/or black-colored feces
- ➔ Yellowing of the skin, gums, or whites of the eyes

What do I need to know?

- ✓ Make sure you understand **how to administer** the drug, **how much** to give, **how frequently** and for **how long**. If you are unsure, ask your veterinarian.
- ✓ **Always give** the medication **with or after food**. Your vet may suggest feeding canned rather than dry food to help encourage good fluid intake, as maintaining a good fluid intake is important.
- ✓ If your cat does not eat **DO NOT** give the medication. Contact your veterinarian.
- ✓ **Talk to your veterinarian** about what monitoring should be done to safeguard your cat – **how frequently** your cat should be re-examined, **what** blood and urine tests should be done, and **how frequently** these should be done.
- ✓ **Never** give your cat **any** other medication at the same time **without first asking your veterinarian**.
- ✓ If **at any stage** you have concerns, or see any potential adverse effects, **STOP** giving the medication and **contact your veterinarian** immediately.



Safety first: If you are in any doubt, STOP the medication and TALK to your veterinarian