



Referral Animal Hospital, P.A.

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Postoperative Care: Using Acepromazine

Your pet has been sent home with Acepromazine. This is a potent phenothiazine tranquilizer, and the intent of its use is to “take the edge off” your pet, making them more content to be less active in the post-operative phase of their rehabilitation. Acepromazine has a quite variable effect from animal to animal. Because of this, it can be difficult to know the exact dosage appropriate for your pet. We recommend an average dose, based on your pet’s size, and that dose may then be adjusted by you to achieve the desired effect. It is extremely difficult to overdose and cause significant harm with this drug. A high dose will result in severe tranquilization, however, which will be manifested as a deep sleep. Some pets can be difficult to arouse from this deep sleep for several hours. What most typically happens with a high dose is that the pet will sleep for approximately 12 hours and then wake up and be normal. Side effects that your pet may exhibit while on Acepromazine are: altered breathing patterns, blood shot eyes, and protrusion of the third eyelid (a pink fleshy eyelid that people don’t have, in the inner corner of the eye socket).

Animals that have been lightly tranquilized with the Acepromazine can be aroused out of their tranquilization. That is, should they see an appropriate stimulus, their adrenaline will start flowing and they can act normal for a while. However, once they have been placed in a quieter environment, the tranquilizer will again take hold and they will become tranquil.

Acepromazine is readily metabolized by the liver. As you continue to administer this drug to your pet, the liver will become more adept at getting rid of the drug in your pet’s system. Hence, you may need to increase the drug dose almost on a weekly basis, to continue to achieve the desired sedative effect. We recommend increasing the drug by 1/2 tablet at a time. Generally, the drug should be given three times a day, as needed. When a dose is given, it will take 20-30 minutes for the drug to take effect. Obviously, the longer your pet needs to be on Acepromazine, the more judicious should your use of the drug be, as within several weeks’ time the liver becomes so adept at getting rid of the drug that an extremely high dose of the tranquilizer no longer has any effect. Interestingly, within a few weeks of discontinuing Acepromazine, your pet will once again become susceptible to a very low dose of the drug. **This drug is not addictive.**

In very few cases some pets may have an abnormal reaction to Acepromazine and become hyperactive, aggressive, or suffer a personality change. This is extremely rare and the effects go away as the drug wears off. Some pets, (especially spayed females) may also have mild urinary incontinence while on this drug.

Some people do not feel comfortable with the side effects of this medication. The purpose of placing your pet on this drug is to decrease their tendencies to become over active and undo or damage the repairs made during surgery. If you can achieve your pet’s tranquility through confinement, or if their inherent personality is mellow, then minimal use of this drug would be needed.

Please do not hesitate to contact the WCVS office if you have any questions regarding the use of this medication.