

Psyllium (Metamucil)

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Generic Name
Psyllium

Brand Name
Vetasyll, Metamucil

Type of Drug
Bulk forming laxative

Form and Storage
Capsules and powder
Store at room temperature protected from moisture.

Indications for Use
Treatment of constipation, megacolon, large bowel diarrhea, inflammatory bowel disease, and anal gland disease.

General Information
Not FDA approved for use in dogs and cats, but it is a common and accepted veterinary practice to use psyllium in dogs and cats. Available by prescription and over the counter. Laxatives are used to prevent and to treat constipation in dogs and cats. Several types of laxatives are available and should be chosen based on the animal's individual needs. Psyllium is made from the fibrous coating of a plant seed. It passes through the intestines undigested and, in the colon, absorbs water and swells making the stool larger and softer. The increased bulk in the colon stimulates intestinal contractions and bowel movements. May take 72 hours to start seeing effects. Has also been used to increase stool size to help with recurring anal gland problems. The increased bulk of the stool helps to put more pressure on the glands so they express themselves. Other bulk forming laxatives include bran and pumpkin (which many cats and dogs like).

Usual Dose and Administration
Contact your veterinarian for dose information. Mix with wet food. Amount and frequency depends on response to treatment and reason for treatment.

NOTE: The powder form has 3.4 grams per rounded teaspoonful.

Side Effects
May have flatulence. Intestinal or esophageal obstruction is possible if water access is limited.

Contraindications/Warnings
Do not use in animals requiring prompt intestinal evacuation.

Do not use in animals that have fecal impaction or intestinal obstruction.

Free access to fresh water is necessary.

Discontinue use and contact a veterinarian if vomiting occurs.

Considered to be safe to use during pregnancy and nursing.

Drug or Food Interactions
May decrease absorption of digoxin, salicylates, and nitrofurantoin. Allow at least 3 hours between giving any of these medications and giving psyllium.

Give with water.

Overdose/Toxicity
May see a loose stool if overdosed and animal has free access to water. May see intestinal obstruction if no free access to water.

Summary

Psyllium is a bulk forming laxative used to treat a number of large intestine disorders in dogs, cats, and other pets. Must give sufficient water when treating with psyllium or intestinal obstruction could occur. Contact your veterinarian if your pet experiences loose stool or an inability to defecate while being treated with psyllium.