

## CLIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Updated: March 2020

# Chlorambucil

- Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.
- Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.
- This medicine has been prescribed for *your* pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.

The medicine you have been given for your dog or cat is called chlorambucil. It may have a trade name such as Leukeran®, but often will just be called chlorambucil.

### What is chlorambucil?

Chlorambucil belongs to a group of medicines called *alkylating drugs*, which are a type of *cytotoxic drug*. Cytotoxic drugs have both anti-cancer activity, can suppress the immune system and the potential to damage normal tissue; their use is sometimes referred to as 'chemotherapy'. They may be used to help cure cancer, or to prolong life by relieving symptoms of an incurable cancer. Cytotoxic drugs are often used in combination with several other drugs and may be used alongside radiotherapy or surgery to treat cancer.

### Why has my pet been prescribed chlorambucil?

Chlorambucil is used in veterinary patients to help treat certain types of cancer including those affecting blood cells, bone marrow and other lymphoid tissue. Lymphoid tissue includes small glands around the body (lymph nodes), the spleen and bone marrow. These are part of the body's immune system, helping to protect it against infections. Chlorambucil can also be used to suppress the immune system in conditions where it starts to attack the body's own cells or tissues. Such conditions are referred to as immune-mediated and include chronic inflammatory gastrointestinal diseases and immune-mediated blood/joint disorders.

### How should I store chlorambucil?

Store in a closed, light-protected container in a refrigerator between 2° and 8°C. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

### How do I give chlorambucil tablets to my pet?

**Disposable gloves should be worn at all times when handling and administering this drug.** Disguise the tablets in a small quantity of a strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. If this is not possible then they can be placed carefully on the back of the pet's tongue and their mouth held closed until the entire dose has been

swallowed. Please consult your vet before doing this as they may be able to offer some practical tips to avoid handling the drug. **Faeces, urine and saliva from dogs and cats taking chlorambucil will contain small traces of the drug. Therefore, do not allow your pet to lick your skin (including hands and face) and make sure they go to the toilet well away from other pets and from people. Wear disposable gloves when picking up faeces in bags. Dispose of faeces in domestic waste.**

### How long will my pet need to take chlorambucil?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients but is likely to be for a long time. Unused tablets and empty containers should be returned to your veterinary practice for safe disposal.

### What should I do if I run out of tablets?

Try not to run out of tablets. Make sure you order more tablets from your vet if your supply is getting low. If you do run out, contact your own vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

### What should I do if I miss a dose?

If a dose is missed, give the medication as soon as possible. However, it is best to skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your pet's next scheduled dose. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the total stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

### What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

**Contact your vet immediately** if your pet receives an overdose of chlorambucil. There is limited information about chlorambucil overdose in dogs and cats, although fits and severely low levels of all blood cells have been reported.

### Can my pet take chlorambucil if I am already giving them other drugs?

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications, even if you think they

already know. This includes herbal or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop or pharmacy.

### What are the possible side effects of chlorambucil for my pet?

Cytotoxic drugs such as chlorambucil have the potential to cause nausea and vomiting. Additional drugs are available to prevent the nausea and vomiting, or treat it if it arises. The side effects of chlorambucil are most likely to be vomiting, diarrhoea and the suppression of the production of blood cells by bone marrow. Low levels of white blood cells can leave the patient susceptible to other infections. For this reason your pet will require regular blood tests to monitor any changes. Alopecia (hair loss), particularly in Poodles and Kerry Blues, has been reported. Very rarely chlorambucil may cause fits in patients or other neurological problems in cats. Despite the potential for side effects, chlorambucil is considered one of the 'safer' cytotoxic drugs available. If your pet shows any unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet.

### What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking chlorambucil?

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you should not give any further doses and should contact your vet as soon as possible for advice.

### What should I do if a person accidentally takes this drug?

If a person accidentally takes your pet's tablets, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and any remaining tablets plus their container (even if it is empty) with you.

### Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about this drug, or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about chlorambucil.

### The Prescribing Cascade

This medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

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