



Drug Handout: Digoxin

What is Digoxin?

Digoxin is a cardiac glycoside originally obtained from the Foxglove plant. It works by altering how certain cells pump in and out electrolytes (sodium and potassium). The end result is an increase in amount of calcium within the heart cells. This increase in calcium helps the heart muscle contract stronger and slows the speed of electric impulses through the heart. It is used for treatment of congestive heart failure and elevated heart rates; often used in combination with other drugs.

Uses/Indications

- Helpful in controlling congestive heart failure
- Slows heart rate in any patient
- Heart rate control in patients with atrial fibrillation
- Arrhythmia control in patients with atrial flutter or other supraventricular tachycardias

Adverse Effects [please contact CVCA should any of these symptoms be noted]

- **Adverse effects of digoxin are usually associated with high or toxic blood levels of the drug.**
- **Stomach upset is the most common side effect. Please contact CVCA should you note a poor appetite, weight loss, or any vomiting or diarrhea.**
- **Can result in various abnormal heart rhythms when at high levels (heart block, ventricular and atrial arrhythmias often in combination).**
- **Increased risk for toxicity in patients with kidney disease, certain breeds (mostly herding breeds/MDR1 defect), and those with low potassium.**

Client Information

- Best given with food.
- Tablet and liquid formulations available. Unfortunately, the liquid can not be made into a flavored suspension.
- Increasing dietary fiber and certain concurrent medications may alter how digoxin is absorbed.
- **Please do not increase the dose without the recommendation of a veterinarian.**
- **Do not double up on missed doses. It is better to skip a dose if there is any question.**
- **Blood chemistry and serum Digoxin levels are recommended at least every 6 months.**

Interactions with Other Drugs

- Some drugs may decrease digoxin levels (antacids, kapectate, certain chemotherapy drugs, metoclopramide)
- Some drugs may increase digoxin levels (erythromycin, clarithromycin, tetracycline, spironolactone, itraconazole, alprazolam)
- The doctors at CVCA have taken this into account, however, please feel free to contact us regarding any concurrent medications your pet may be prescribed

Dosage Forms

Digoxin Tablets - 0.125mg (125 micrograms), 0.25mg (250 micrograms)

Digoxin Elixir - 0.05mg/ml in 60ml dropper bottle

Synonyms

(Digoxin and Lanoxin)

