Lactulose

> ■ **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 lactulose. It may have a trade name such as Lactugal® but often will just be called lactulose.

What is lactulose?
Lactulose is an *osmotic laxative*, relieving constipation by drawing water into the gut, causing more rapid bowel evacuation. It also traps ammonia in the gut, so that it cannot be absorbed and is cleared out of the body in faeces.

Why has my pet been prescribed lactulose?
Lactulose is used to relieve constipation in cats and dogs. It is also used in dogs and cats with a condition called hepatic encephalopathy. This is a disorder causing confusion, fits and other disturbances of brain function due to the accumulation of toxins (including ammonia) in the blood that would normally be removed by the liver. The condition can occur in patients with abnormal blood vessels that bypass the liver, or with liver failure, or wherever the liver is unable to clear toxins from the circulation.

How should I store lactulose?
This medicine does not require special storage conditions. For safety, ***all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.***

How do I give lactulose to my pet?
Cats in particular do not like taking lactulose. Try to disguise the drug in a small quantity of strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Alternatively, it can be carefully squirted into the mouth of your pet and their mouth held closed until the entire dose has been swallowed. Ensure your pet has access to clean fresh water at all times.

How long will my pet need to take lactulose?
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 may be for the rest of their life in the case of liver disorders.

What should I do if I run out of lactulose?
Try not to run out. Make sure you order more 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?
One extra dose is unlikely to hurt your pet. However, contact your vet if a large overdose is given as this may cause diarrhoea and/or abdominal pain (which may cause your pet to appear hunched and uncomfortable) and your pet may become dehydrated.

Can my pet take lactulose 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. Lactulose should not be used with other laxatives and it should be avoided if your pet is taking oral antibiotics.

What are the possible side effects of lactulose for my pet?
Lactulose can cause flatulence, diarrhoea and abdominal discomfort. If these side effects are seen, then try reducing the dose of lactulose by a small amount (about 25%).

It is normal for faeces to become sloppy when an animal is on lactulose, but the dose can be reduced if the motions become watery. 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 lactulose?
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 medication, the person should be taken to their local hospital. Take this leaflet and any remaining lactulose plus the 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 lactulose.