Ampicillin with Sulbactam
*(am-pi-sil-in with sul-bak-tam)*
**Description:** Beta Lactam Antibiotic
**Other Names for this Medication:** Unasyn®
**Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary:** None. **Human:** Ampicillin with sulbactam is available in a 2:1 fixed ratio of ampicillin to sulbactam and vial strength is expressed as the total amount of drug in the combination: 1.5 g, 3 g, & 15 g vials for reconstitution.
**Antimicrobial Classification:** Highly Important

This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication. It is to help answer commonly asked questions and help you give the medication safely and effectively to your animal. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

**Key Information**
- This medication cannot be given by mouth; it must be injected.
- Injectable solutions may cause stinging when given under the skin (subcutaneous).
- The frequency of administration must be reduced for patients with kidney damage.

**How is this medication useful?**
In dogs and cats, ampicillin with sulbactam can be useful to treat infections that have become resistant to other antibiotics. The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in humans, but it is not officially approved for use in animals. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe products containing this drug in different species or for other conditions in certain situations. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this drug is the most appropriate choice.

**What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?**
Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.
- Other drugs can interact with this drug combination, so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.
- Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your animal may have now or has had in the past.
- If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian about the treatment and how well it did or didn’t work.
If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug.

Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your animal has developed in the past.

**How long until I will know if this medication is working, and how long will the effects of this medication last?**

This medication should start having effects within 1 to 2 hours; however, you will not see the effects of this medication outwardly. Your animal should begin feeling better within 1 to 2 days.

The effects of this medication are short-lived, meaning they will stop working within 24 hours, although the benefits may be prolonged if your animal has decreased kidney and/or liver function.

**When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?**

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug **SHOULD NOT** be used in patients:

- That are allergic to it or drugs like it (eg, other penicillins and cephalosporins).

This drug should be used **WITH CAUTION** in patients:

- That have kidney damage.

If your animal has any of these conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

**What are the side effects of this medication?**

*Common, but not serious side effects include:*

- Diarrhea, vomiting, and loss of appetite.
- Stinging at the site of the shot.

You don’t have to be overly concerned if you see any of these signs unless they are severe, worsen, or continue to be a problem. Contact your veterinarian if this happens.

*Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:*

- Complete loss of appetite in cats may indicate severe liver problems.
- Low energy level.
- Difficulty walking, staggering.
- Rashes, trouble breathing, and pale gums may mean your animal is having an allergic reaction to this drug.

If you see any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately.

**If my animal gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?**

Overdoses of ampicillin with sulbactam can be serious and can cause damage to the nervous system and liver, but vomiting is the most likely effect. If you witness or suspect an overdose, immediately contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center for further advice. Animal poison control centers that are open 24 hours a day include: **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435) and **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661); a consultation fee is charged for these services.

**How should this medication be given?**

For this medication to work, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. It’s a good idea to always check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

*By Injection:*

- Your veterinarian or pharmacist will give you all of the items you need to give the shots (needles, syringes, diluent). If the medicine needs to be mixed before you give it, mix it exactly as your veterinarian or pharmacist instructs you.
- Because this drug must be injected, be sure you understand the proper dosage, location(s), and method for giving the shots.
- Use a new needle and new syringe to give each shot. Do not reuse needles and syringes.
- It is very important to equalize the pressure in a vial of ampicillin when adding diluent. Your pharmacist or veterinarian will show you how to add diluent in a way that does not cause the ampicillin to spray back out of the vial.
- After adding the diluent, shake vials of ampicillin with sulbactam until the liquid is clear. Your veterinarian will usually have you dilute the entire vial of the antibiotic combination in another larger bag of fluids to inject under the skin.
- Ampicillin with sulbactam liquid solutions break down quickly if not mixed exactly as instructed and must be stored in the refrigerator. Once mixed, the expiration date varies (from 1 hour to 72 hours). Do not use any mixed medication after this expiration date.

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Special Instructions:

- Do not store ampicillin with sulbactam liquids for injection at room temperature.
- Ampicillin with sulbactam shots may sting when given. If your animal objects too much, your veterinarian may be able to give you something to mix with the drug to decrease pain.
- If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- This medication can be given for various lengths of time. Be sure you understand how long your veterinarian wants you to continue giving this medication. Prescription refills may be necessary before the therapy will be complete. Before stopping this medication, talk to your veterinarian, as there may be important reasons to continue its use.
- If you are giving these shots at home, place used needles and syringes in a sharps disposal container immediately after they have been used. Your veterinarian or pharmacist will help you obtain these containers. Be careful not to accidentally stick yourself; do not attempt to disconnect the needle from the syringe. Keep containers out of reach of children and pets. Once about ¾ full, dispose of containers according to your community guidelines. Check with your local trash removal services or health department (listed online and in the city or county government [blue] pages in your phone book) to see which disposal methods are available in your area.

What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?

If you miss a dose, give it when you remember, but if it is close to the time for the next dose, skip the dose you missed and give it at the next scheduled time. After that, return to the regular dosing schedule. Do not double-up or give extra doses.

How should I store this medication?

- Store this medication in the original bottles or vials. Dry vials of the powder may be stored at room temperature but once mixed, the liquid must be stored in the refrigerator. Keep away from children and other animals.
- If your veterinarian or pharmacist has made (compounded) a special formulation for your animal, follow the storage recommendations and expiration date for the product.

Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other animals?

There are no specific precautions required when handling this medication unless you are allergic to it. Wash your hands after handling any medication.

How should I dispose of this medication if I don’t use it all?

- Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug “take-back” program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix the drug with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- Do not save leftover medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Check rules and regulations before entering your animal in a competition while this medication is being administered.

If you have any other questions about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.