**Heparin**

(hep-ar-in)

**Description:** Anticoagulant; Blood Thinner  
**Other Names for this Medication:** Unfractionated Heparin, UFH  
**Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary:** None. **Human:** Heparin sodium comes in a variety or strengths and sizes.

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 must be injected under the skin (subcutaneously, SC); be sure you understand how to correctly give the injection. Several shots a day may be required.  
- Bleeding and bruising can occur. If you see any unexpected bleeding and/or bruising, contact your veterinarian immediately.  
- If your animal is lacking energy or interest in things, appears to be having trouble breathing, has trouble walking, or loses the use of its rear legs, contact your veterinarian immediately as blood clots may have formed.

**How is this medication useful?**

Heparin is a blood thinner that helps prevent abnormal blood clot formation. It does not break up clots that have already formed, but helps prevent them from becoming larger or prevent new ones from forming. This medicine is most commonly used in the hospital, but it can be prescribed for use at home under the close guidance of your veterinarian.

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.

- Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you are giving your animal, as well as the amount and schedule of 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 veterinarian will need to run further tests to determine if the medication is working appropriately. 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 animals that are allergic to it, enoxaparin, dalteparin, or pork products.
- Injected (given as a shot) into the muscle (IM, intramuscularly).

This drug should be used WITH CAUTION in patients:
- That have low platelet counts or have other conditions where bleeding can occur (extreme caution).
- That are actively bleeding (extreme caution).

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?

Side effects that are usually not serious include:
- Pain at the injection site.

Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:
- Bleeding, bruising.
- Redness and itching at the injection site.
- Horses: pale gums, lower energy level.
- Dogs & Cats: fever.
- Itchiness, hives, swelling of the face or throat, or trouble breathing may indicate an allergic reaction to the drug.

If your animal has any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately.

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

It is important to follow the label instructions exactly as overdoses can cause significant bleeding. Contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center immediately 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.

- When injections (shots) are needed outside of a hospital setting, heparin should only be injected under the skin (SC, subcutaneously) and NOT into a muscle (IM, intramuscular) or vein (IV). Be sure you understand the proper dose, location, and method for giving the shots.
- A small needle, provided by your pharmacist or veterinarian, is used to give the shots. Do not reuse needles and syringes.
- Heparin is a potent drug and given in small amounts; make sure your pharmacist or veterinarian shows you exactly how much to inject.
- Do not shake heparin injection liquid as this may damage the medicine and make it not work. If the vial is cold, roll it gently between your hands to warm the liquid.
- Change the injection site daily and do not give it too often in the same spot.
- If you are injecting this medication 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.

- Do not use any medication that has changed colors or has specks in it.
- 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.

**What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?**
It is important to give the drug as directed or clots can form. 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?**
The injection liquid can be stored at room temperature. However, if your veterinarian or pharmacist has drawn the drug into syringes, they may suggest it be stored in the refrigerator. Do not allow the injection liquid to freeze and avoid exposure to excessive heat. Open vials should be discarded after 30 days or sooner (your veterinarian or pharmacist will advise you). Keep away from children and other animals.

**Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other animals?**
There are no specific precautions required when handling this medication, but be careful to avoid accidental needle sticks. Be sure to dispose of used syringes and needles properly in the sharps container given to you by your veterinarian or pharmacist.

**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?**
- Do not allow your animal to be in situations where it might be injured or cut.
- While your animal is receiving this medication, your veterinarian will need to do blood tests to monitor how well the drug is working. Do not miss these important follow-up visits.
- Many pain medications (eg, aspirin, carprofen, etodolac, deracoxib), as well as other drugs that affect blood clotting (eg, warfarin, clopidogrel), can also prevent the blood from clotting. Do not use any other medications, even those purchased without a prescription, in your animal without first consulting your veterinarian.
- 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.**