



# MEDICATIONS *for fearful dogs and cats*

Whether you're trying to prevent distress, alleviate ongoing distress or help dogs and cats not make fearful memories, use this guide to find the right formulation for your patients.

## Choices of medications to be given the day before and the day of the exam

- > **Benzodiazepines** (alprazolam, midazolam, lorazepam)
- > **Gabapentin**
- > **Serotonin antagonists and reuptake inhibitors-SARIs** (trazodone)
- > **Clonidine**

### NOTES

- > All of these medications can be used with dexmedetomidine (an alpha2 agonist) and atipamezole (an alpha2 antagonist) if everyone plans for this in advance.
- > All of these medications can be given both every 12 to 24 hours and as needed for veterinary visits.
- > Benzodiazepine dosages are highly individual and multiple trials may be necessary to find an effective dose for the patient.
- > Benzodiazepines are best given one to two hours before the exam and repeated 30 minutes before the exam. For this routine, dosages can be either whole or half-dosages and some trial and error will be involved in learning what is best for that patient.
- > Most benzodiazepines are scored and easily cut further with a pill cutter, but they melt if hands or surfaces are damp.
- > For patients that do not take tablets well, benzodiazepines can be made into a paste with a tiny bit of water and smeared on the gums or tongue. As soon as the patients licks or swallows, the medication enters the system.
- > Clients can try test dosages at home to rule out undesirable effects and as a first step to finding a helpful dosage for their dog or cat.

## Choices of medications to be given one to two hours before the exam

- > **Benzodiazepines** (alprazolam, midazolam, lorazepam)
- > **GABA analogs** (gabapentin)
- > **SARIs** (trazodone)
- > **Alpha agonists** (clonidine)

## Medications to be given during or after the exam because the patient has become distressed

- > **Benzodiazepines** (alprazolam, midazolam, lorazepam)

### NOTES

- > Engendering a small amount of sedation is preferable to engendering fear, but we still seek the dose that produces relief of fear and anxiety, while maintaining all normal behaviors unimpaired.
- > Clients should be advised that if a dog or cat is treated for extreme fear at or after a veterinary visit, that dog or cat could sleep more deeply once home, but that the sleep should be restorative.

## Medications to be given to quell nausea for travel

- > **Maropitant citrate** (Cerenia)

## Choices of medications for mild sedation for cats

- > **Chlorpheniramine**
- > **Phenobarbital**

**DOSAGES ON REVERSE ►**

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## Dosages

Medication	Cat	Dog
Alprazolam	0.0125-0.025 mg/kg by mouth to start; this is one-fourth of a 0.25-mg tablet for tiny cats every 8 to 12 hours	0.01-0.1 mg/kg by mouth every 4-6 hours; the best starting dosage range may be 0.02-0.04 mg/kg (the smallest tablet is 0.25 mg)
Chlorpheniramine	2-4 mg/cat by mouth every 12-24 hours	NA
Clonidine	NA	0.01-0.05 mg/kg by mouth, up to 0.9 mg
Gabapentin	3-5 mg/kg by mouth every 12-24 hours or 2 hours before an appointment	<i>Low dose:</i> 2-5 mg/kg by mouth every 12 hours  <i>Higher dose:</i> 10-20 mg/kg by mouth every 12 hours  Can also give 1-2 hours before appointment
Lorazepam	0.05 mg/kg by mouth every 12-24 hours up to 0.125-0.25 mg/cat; start low—starting range reported at 0.03-0.06 mg/kg; smallest tablet is 0.5 mg	0.02-0.1 mg/kg by mouth every 8-12 hours  Can also give 1-2 hours before the appointment
Maropitant citrate	NA	2-8 mg/kg by mouth every 24 hours
Midazolam	0.05-0.3 mg/kg SQ, IM or IV, only; consider this choice more for sedation than anxiety, although very low dosages may be anxiolytic.	NA
Phenobarbital	2-3 mg/kg by mouth 1 hour before travel	NA
Trazodone	0.5 mg/kg (~2.5-3.0 mg per cat) by mouth every 8 hours (~2.5-3.0 mg per cat)	2-3 mg/kg to start by mouth every 12-24 hours

