



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