

# Alprazolam

## Benzodiazepine Sedative/Tranquilizer (Systemic Drug)



### Prescriber Highlights

- Used for adjunctive behavioral treatment in dogs and cats, especially for prophylaxis of anxiety triggered by storms, fireworks, and similar events
- C-IV controlled substance

### Uses, Indications

- Useful for adjunctive therapy in anxious, aggressive dogs, or animals demonstrating panic reactions
- Most effective when used before a triggering event
- May be useful in treating anxiety disorders in cats
- Unlike oral diazepam, alprazolam has not been implicated in causing liver failure in cats

### Contraindications, Precautions, Warnings

#### ■ Contraindications

Some veterinarians believe alprazolam is contraindicated in aggressive patients, as anxiety may restrain animals from aggressive tendencies. This remains controversial.

Information about this drug was adapted from Plumb's® Veterinary Drugs. Further details and more therapeutics can be found with a subscription at [plumbsveterinarydrugs.com](http://plumbsveterinarydrugs.com)

#### ■ Precautions

Patients with impaired hepatic or renal function or narrow angle glaucoma; debilitated or geriatric patients

#### ■ Warnings

May impair working animal performance; has potential for human abuse and drug diversion

### Side Effects

- Sedation, transient ataxia, and increased appetite
- In cats, irritability, depression, increased affection, and aberrant demeanor are also possible
- Rarely, dogs may exhibit a contradictory response (eg, CNS excitement including increased aggression, anxiety, agitation)

### Drug Interactions\*

- May increase serum levels of tricyclic antidepressants (eg, amitriptyline, clomipramine) and digoxin
- Alprazolam metabolism may decrease when used with hepatically metabolized drugs (eg, cimetidine, erythromycin, ketoconazole, itraconazole)
- Additive effects may occur when used with other CNS depressant agents (eg, barbiturates, narcotics, anesthetics)
- Fluoxetine and fluvoxamine may increase serum alprazolam levels

\*Not a complete list

### Monitoring

- Clinical efficacy and side effects
- Consider monitoring hepatic enzymes in cats when used long term

### Client Information

- Administer alprazolam 30 minutes to 1 hour prior to triggering events
- Most common side effect is drowsiness, but excitement and behavioral changes (eg, increased appetite), although rare, may occur, especially in cats
- Immediately report yellowing of the gums, skin, or whites of the eyes

### Dosage Forms

- The following are human-labeled products available for veterinary off-label use:
  - Alprazolam oral tablets: 0.25 mg, 0.5 mg, 1 mg, and 2 mg
  - Alprazolam extended-release oral tablets: 0.5 mg, 1 mg, 2 mg, and 3 mg
  - Alprazolam orally disintegrating tablets: 0.25 mg, 0.5 mg, 1 mg, and 2 mg
  - Alprazolam oral solution: 1 mg/mL in 30 mL

—Compiled and summarized from Plumb's® Veterinary Drugs by Shannon Palermo, VMD