

# Zonisamide (Zonegran®)

by Dr. Carrie Journey DVM, DACVIM (Neurology)

## SUMMARY:

- 1) Zonisamide is generally well tolerated. Some dogs may experience a loss of appetite, which will mean they need a different medication.
- 2) This medication can cause a change in blood chemistry called a renal tubular acidosis, which can lead to urinary stones.
- 3) Some pets may be sleepy or incoordinated when starting this medication, but this often improves with time.
- 4) Never stop or change seizure medication without first speaking with a veterinarian.

## EXPLANATION:

Zonisamide is an anticonvulsant or seizure medication. The goal of this medication is to make your pet's seizure less frequent and less severe. It is unlikely that any seizure medication will make your pet 100% seizure free.

It is very important to give this medication on schedule. Make a note of when you need refills, and try to get them at least one week in advance. Set a timer on your watch or phone to help remind you to give the medication on schedule.

This medication is usually given twice a day, and may be given with or without food.

## MONITORING:

Regular vet visits are important while on zonisamide. We recommend visits twice a year to discuss how your pet is doing. At these visits your vet may want to check blood work.

In all pets on this medication we recommend yearly general blood work (called a CBC and Chemistry) and a urinalysis. If renal tubular acidosis is suspected, further testing including urine cultures and a blood gas may be recommended. Depending on your pet's seizure control drug levels may also be recommended once to twice a year, as well as after dose changes.

## SIDE EFFECTS:

- 1) Many pets will act sleepy or drunk while their body adjust to the medication. It can take two weeks for some pets to adjust. If your pet is especially incoordinated, keep them away from things like swimming pools and staircases until they are more sure on their feet.
- 2) Some pets will stop eating when given this medication. This means they may need a reduced dose of zonisamide or a new medication. If your pet skips more than one meal, please tell your veterinarian.
- 3) Some pets will have a change in blood chemistry called a renal tubular acidosis. This can lead to kidney and bladder stone formation. This is reversible in most pets with a reduction or change in medication.



Journey Veterinary Neurology

©2015 Journey Veterinary Neurology, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

- 4) Very rarely, zonisamide can cause behavior changes, including aggression. If your pet is showing a change in behavior, tell your veterinarian.

**SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS:**

Phenobarbital may speed up the way the body metabolizes zonisamide. If your pet is already on phenobarbital or starts phenobarbital while on zonisamide, your vet will likely increase the dose of zonisamide to compensate for this change in metabolism.

