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## **Potassium Bromide**

Potassium bromide is one of the premier treatments for canine epilepsy, a brain disorder involving abnormal electrical activity that impairs proper nerve transmission and triggers recurrent, unprovoked seizures. Yet because it can take up to four months to reach proper concentration in the dog's brain, potassium bromide isn't seen as a reliable first line of defense.

1. Canine epilepsy takes two forms: idiopathic, which involves seizures due to no apparent brain abnormality; and symptomatic, which has its roots in brain lesions or another identifiable cause. Potassium bromide controls seizures at a cellular level by suppressing neuronal activity. It must be administered once a day in regular doses for several weeks before it reaches peak levels in the [dog's](#) system and takes full effect. Since time is of the essence in most seizure cases, potassium bromide is often used in concert with phenobarbital. Once peak potassium bromide levels are reached, the dog can be weaned off the phenobarbital entirely. A loading, or larger, dose of potassium bromide can be given at the start of the treatment to help speed up the process.

## **History**

2. Potassium bromide was used as a sedative and anticonvulsive in humans as far back as the 1800s.

## **Types**

3. Potassium bromide is available as both a capsule and liquid. The liquid form is available in flavors and is cheaper than the capsule. It's also easier to adjust dosages when administering liquid potassium bromide.

## **Considerations**

4. Potassium bromide should never be given on an empty stomach. This can be avoided by mixing some with the dog's food or working the capsule into a piece of bread. Giving the medicine with food limits the potential for nausea and vomiting.

The dog's salt intake can greatly increase the rate by which the bromide is eliminated from the body. Too much salt will mean the bromide is expelled too quickly, while too little salt won't remove the bromide quickly enough, increasing the risk of toxicity. That's why it's imperative that salt intake remain consistent throughout treatment.

Always consult a veterinarian before stopping potassium bromide therapy, as it's unwise to quit taking it suddenly. It is preferred to gradually taper off dosages.

## **Benefits**

5. Unlike phenobarbital, potassium bromide has no effect on the liver. This makes it the first choice for many veterinarians, particularly when treating a dog with liver damage. It is readily absorbed in the body and excreted through the kidneys with no difficulty.

## **Warnings**

6. Other common side effects include lethargy, weakness in the hindquarters, lack of coordination, increased urination and occasional skin disorders. Lowering the dosage should eliminate or at least alleviate the symptoms. Most side effects will disappear on their own in a few weeks.