

Gabapentin for the treatment of nerve pain

Patient Information Leaflet

If you have any questions about your medication please ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

- Storage instructions: Please keep all medications in a safe place out of sight and reach from children, pets, and vulnerable adults.
- Do not share your medication with anyone else.
- Any unused medication should be returned to a pharmacy for safe disposal

Patient information

The information in this leaflet is to explain the safe use of gabapentin. It is not intended to replace advice from your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. More information is on the leaflet inside the medication packaging.

What is gabapentin for?

- Gabapentin is a medicine which may help improve your nerve pain, such as shooting, stabbing, or burning pain.
- Gabapentin works by changing the way that nerves send messages to your brain. If the messages are reduced, then the pain will be reduced.
- Gabapentin is also used to treat epilepsy and anxiety, but you are taking it for pain.

How should I take gabapentin?

- Gabapentin capsules should be swallowed whole, with a glass of water (on a full or empty stomach). Do not take more than prescribed.
- Do not take indigestion remedies 2 hours before or after you take this medicine

How long will it take for gabapentin to work?

- Every person is different. It may take 1-2 weeks before you notice an improvement in your pain control.
- Gabapentin works well for some people but not for everyone. **If gabapentin doesn't reduce your pain after 4-6 weeks talk to your doctor about reducing and stopping gabapentin. Do not stop taking gabapentin suddenly.**

What do I do if I forget to take a regular dose of Gabapentin?

- If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember unless it is time to take the next dose. Do not take two doses at the same time.

Does gabapentin have any side effects?

- Most side-effects are mild and are worse just after starting gabapentin or increasing the dose. Side-effects usually go away after a few days of taking gabapentin, so try to keep taking it if you can. If you are worried, contact your GP (doctor's) surgery or speak to your pharmacy.

**A common side effect of gabapentin is drowsiness.
If your ability to drive is impaired, you must not drive or operate machinery.
Alcohol increases the sedative effects of gabapentin.
We advise you to avoid drinking alcohol when taking gabapentin.**

Important information: Don't stop taking gabapentin suddenly or you might get withdrawal symptoms. If you have been taking a high dose for a long-time, withdrawal symptoms can be more serious. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist to get a safe gradual reduction plan.

Side effects continued:

- **The most common side effects** include dizziness, drowsiness, reduced concentration, headache, and dry mouth. Some people may feel sick or have diarrhoea or constipation.
- **Less common side effects** include vision disturbances, indigestion, leg swelling, weight gain, memory loss, mood changes, hallucinations, or rash. There is a rare risk of breathing difficulties when taking gabapentin. If you get any of these side-effects contact your GP (doctor's) surgery.
- Some people develop severe anxiety if they miss a dose of gabapentin. If you are worried this is happening to you contact your GP (doctor's) surgery.

What if I take other medication?

- If you take other medication which can cause drowsiness care is required as side-effects are increased.
- **If you take a strong pain medicine, called an opioid, it is important that you tell your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist as the dose of opioid or gabapentin may need reducing.** Examples of opioid medicines include codeine, tramadol, buprenorphine, morphine, oxycodone and fentanyl.

How long will I take gabapentin for?

- If gabapentin is helpful, you can continue taking it and your treatment will be reviewed regularly.
- We recommend you reduce the dose every so often, at least every 12 months or after a few months of your pain being settled. This is because pain changes over time.
- Reducing the dose of gabapentin will let you check:
 - **If your pain is still a problem,**
 - **How well gabapentin is helping your pain and,**
 - **Help you check for possible side-effects from the medication.**

Starting dose

- Your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist will give you instructions on how to start taking gabapentin. You can ask them to complete the table below. Slowly increasing the dose should lead to fewer side-effects. If you get side-effects, drop back to the previous dose. Once the symptoms have eased you can then try to increase the dose. See the section on side-effects.
- **Once your pain has improved to an acceptable level, do not increase the dose further. Continue on the same dose. You will need a review at 4-8 weeks.**
- Completing a Pain Diary can help you see what benefit you are getting. Download here ([Pain Diary](#)) or ask at your GP (doctor's) surgery.

Gabapentin starting dose

	Breakfast	Tea	Night
For 3 to 7 days			
For 3 to 7 days			
For 3 to 7 days			
For 3 to 7 days			
For 3 to 7 days			
For 3 to 7 days			
For 3 to 7 days			
For 3 to 7 days			

Important information: Don't stop taking gabapentin suddenly or you might get withdrawal symptoms. If you have been taking a high dose for a long-time, withdrawal symptoms can be more serious. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist to get a safe gradual reduction plan.