

# How to stop gabapentin safely when used for treating 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 help explain how you can safely stop gabapentin. It is not intended to replace advice from your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

### What is gabapentin used for?

- Gabapentin is a medication used to help control pain. It is different from other pain relief medication as it helps to control nerve (neuropathic) pain.
- It works by reducing the number of messages sent to the brain.
- If you have pain that is not caused by nerve damage gabapentin is unlikely to be helpful for you.
- Gabapentin is also used to treat epilepsy and anxiety, but you are taking it for pain.

### Why should I reduce my dose of gabapentin?

- You should reduce the amount of gabapentin medication that you take if advised to do so by your GP, nurse, or pharmacist.
- Gabapentin can be used long-term for nerve pain, but it is recommended that you reduce your dose every so often, at least every 12 months or after a few months of your pain being more settled. This is because pain can change over time, and medication that was helping a year ago may not be helping anymore.
- Gabapentin may be causing side-effects, or you may be more at risk from side-effects, for example: due to an underlying health condition, older age or because you take other medication, such as a strong type of pain medicine called an opioid.
- **Reducing your dose or stopping gabapentin will allow you to check:**
  - **If your pain is still a problem,**
  - **If gabapentin is still helping to control your pain and,**
  - **If gabapentin has been causing any side-effects.**

### What side-effects does gabapentin have?

- **Common side effects** include dizziness, drowsiness, headache, muscle tremor, weight gain, dry mouth. **Less common side effects** include vision disturbances, leg swelling, memory loss, mood changes (depression, anxiety, different thoughts), hallucinations, or rash.

**Warning:** After you start to reduce your dose of gabapentin it is important not to increase the dose without talking to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. Your body will soon get used to the lower dose of gabapentin and it can be dangerous to take a higher dose. There is a risk of overdose or death.

### How do I reduce my dose of gabapentin?

- **Do not stop taking gabapentin suddenly, as you might experience withdrawal symptoms.**
- Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist can provide you with a dose reduction plan. You can ask them to fill in the table below.
- Your dose reduction plan will depend on your current dose and how long you have been taking gabapentin for.

### How will any withdrawal symptoms be managed?

- Withdrawal symptoms can be unpleasant. They may occur within a day and last up to seven days.  
**Examples of withdrawal symptoms include** anxiety, difficulty sleeping, feeling sick, pain or sweating.
- **If you experience withdrawal symptoms do not reduce your dose further.** Keep on the dose that you have reduced to. Once the symptoms have eased you can try again to reduce the dose. If symptoms continue, speak to your GP (doctor's) surgery.
- **Reducing at a slower rate or by smaller amounts may help reduce withdrawal symptoms.**

### Gabapentin reduction schedule

You can ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist to complete this dose reduction table.

Current dose of gabapentin: .....

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Morning								
Afternoon								
Evening								

- **Any reduction is likely to be good for your general health and wellbeing.**
- If you wish to slow down or speed up your dose reduction speak to your GP (doctor's) surgery.
- If you get an increase in pain which doesn't settle do not reduce the dose further speak to your GP (doctor's) surgery.

**Try to increase non-drug ways of managing your pain.  
This includes stretching, pacing of activities,  
relaxing or distraction.**

Click on this link [Patient Resources to help with chronic pain](#) or ask your GP (doctor's) surgery for a copy.

Completing a Pain Diary may help.

Download here ([Pain Diary](#)) or ask at your GP (doctor's) surgery.

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