

How to Stop Pregabalin Safely When Used for Treating Nerve Pain

Patient Information Leaflet

If you have any questions about your medication, please ask your prescriber (who may be a doctor, pharmacist or nurse).

- Storage instructions: Please keep all medications in a safe place out of sight and out of 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 pregabalin. It is not intended to replace advice from your prescriber.

What is pregabalin used for?

- Pregabalin helps to control nerve (neuropathic) pain by changing the way that nerves send messages to your brain. If the messages are reduced, then the pain will be partially reduced.
- If you have pain that is not caused by nerve damage, pregabalin is unlikely to be helpful for you, but you may experience significant side effects.
- Pregabalin is also used to treat epilepsy and anxiety.

Why should I reduce my dose of pregabalin?

- You should reduce the amount of pregabalin medication that you take if advised to do so by your prescriber (who may be a doctor, pharmacist or nurse).
- Pregabalin may not be helping your pain as much as you think. Only around three or four in every ten people taking pregabalin for nerve pain see any significant improvement in their pain, which is at least a 30% reduction in pain.
- Pregabalin may be causing side effects, or you may be more at risk from side effects, for example: due to underlying health conditions; older age; or because you are taking other medications, such as opioids, which are a type of strong pain medicine.
- Pregabalin 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.
- **Reducing your dose or stopping pregabalin will allow you to check:**
 - **if your pain is still a problem,**
 - **whether pregabalin is still helping to control your pain, and,**
 - **if pregabalin has been causing any side effects.**

What side effects does pregabalin have?

- **Common side effects** include dizziness, drowsiness, sedation, headache, muscle tremor, weight gain and dry mouth.
- **Less common side effects** include vision disturbances, leg swelling, memory loss, mood changes (depression, anxiety, different thoughts), hallucinations, or rash. Pregabalin can also cause or worsen heart failure, and cause breathing difficulties, particularly if taken with other sedative medications.
- Pregabalin can increase the risk of birth defects in a baby. Please talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are at risk of becoming pregnant, are already pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant in the future, as there may be safer alternatives to pregabalin available.

How do I reduce my dose of pregabalin?

- Your prescriber (who may be a doctor, pharmacist or nurse) can provide you with a safe dose reduction plan. You can ask them to fill in the table on page 3.
- Your dose reduction plan will depend on your current dose and how long you have been taking pregabalin for.
- **Do not stop taking pregabalin suddenly, as you might experience withdrawal symptoms.**
- Withdrawal symptoms may occur within a day and last up to seven days. The most common withdrawal symptoms are:
 - anxiety
 - difficulty sleeping
 - feeling sick
 - diarrhoea
 - pain (includes headache); or
 - sweating.

If you have been taking a high dose for a long time, withdrawal symptoms can be more serious. Although rare, seizures and feeling depressed (suicidal) have been reported; so, it is important to reduce the dose slowly.

How will any withdrawal symptoms be managed?

- Withdrawal symptoms can be reduced or stopped from happening by reducing the pregabalin dose slowly.
- **If you do experience withdrawal symptoms do not reduce your dose further.** Keep on the dose that you have reduced to. If the symptoms aren't too bothersome you can try again to reduce the dose once the symptoms have eased.
- If you are affected by withdrawal symptoms speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. You may need to reduce more slowly or by smaller amounts to manage these symptoms.

What if my pain increases?

- If your pain increases, try to see if it settles as it may be a temporary withdrawal symptom which will last a few days.
- If the pain doesn't settle, then do not reduce the dose further; and contact your

prescriber. If it is safe to do so; they may recommend you increase your dose slowly back to a previous level, that helps control your pain.

What else can I do to help manage my pain aside from medication?

- **Supported self-management can help improve quality of life with people experiencing long-term pain.**
- Try to increase non-drug ways which can help you manage your pain. This includes stretching, pacing your activities, relaxing or distraction.
- If you would like ideas, you could start looking here:
[Resources for people with pain - Live Well with Pain](#) (created by a small group of healthcare professionals and people with lived experience of long-term pain).
- Please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are unable to access the internet and would like a paper copy; or would like some other ideas.

Pregabalin reduction plan

- **Any reduction is likely to be good for your general health and wellbeing.**
- You should complete this reduction plan with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.
- If you wish to slow down or speed up your dose reduction speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.
- **Warning:** After you start to reduce your dose of pregabalin it is important not to increase the dose without talking to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. Your body will soon get used to the lower dose of pregabalin and it can be dangerous to take a higher dose. There is a risk of overdose or death in this circumstance.

Current dose of pregabalin:
 You should complete this with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Week	Total Daily Dose	Morning	Afternoon	Bedtime
0	_____mg	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)
1	_____mg	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)
2	_____mg	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)
3	_____mg	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)
4	_____mg	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)
5	_____mg	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)
6	_____mg	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)
7	_____mg	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)
8	_____mg	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)	_____mg Number of tablets /capsules (_____)