

# Gabapentin

An information guide



# Gabapentin

## Why have I been prescribed Gabapentin?

Gabapentin is used to treat some types of persistent pain.

It is especially good for nerve pain, such as burning, shooting or stabbing pain. Gabapentin belongs to a group of medicines called anticonvulsants which are also used to treat epilepsy. You may notice that information from the manufacturer may not mention your type of pain.

## How does Gabapentin work?

Gabapentin works by changing the way that nerves send messages to your brain. If the messages are reduced, then the pain will be reduced.

## When should I take it?

Normally, the starting dose is small and may be taken between one and three times a day, but the dose will be gradually increased.

Normally a minimum dose of gabapentin 300mg three times per day is needed to get any benefit and the dose may need to be increased to 1200 mg three times per day.

You will be told how much to start taking and how to increase the dose. The table at the end of the leaflet will help you remember when to increase the dose.

If you are taking antacid medication, it is best to wait for two hours after taking it, before taking gabapentin.

## **How is Gabapentin taken?**

The tablets should be swallowed whole, with a glass of water and may be taken on an empty or full stomach.

**Do not take more than prescribed.**

## **How long will it take to work?**

Every patient is different.

You may notice some initial benefit within 2 weeks, however it may take up to 2 months for a full effect. You will need to increase the dose for gabapentin to be effective.

Gabapentin does not work for everyone. If you do not feel any improvement in your pain after 6 to 8 weeks, do not suddenly stop taking the tablets but speak to your doctor to discuss reducing and stopping the medication.

## **What are the possible side effects?**

Most side effects are mild and it is expected that they tend to reduce after a several days. Generally side effects are worse after starting taking gabapentin or increasing the dose. It is important to persist in taking gabapentin as these side effects usually wear off.

Common side effects include:

- Drowsiness.
- Dizziness.
- Fatigue.
- Muscle tremor.

*If you have these side effects and they are severe contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice.*

Less common side effects include:

- Vision disturbances,
- Indigestion.
- Weight gain.
- Leg swelling.
- Memory loss.
- Euphoria.
- Mood changes.
- Hallucinations.
- A rash.

*If any of these side effects occur contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice.*

### **Can I take this medication long-term?**

Yes, if it helps. You may wish to reduce treatment every so often, to check if your pain is still a problem. This should be done with the advice of your GP or pain specialist, gradually reducing your medication over a period of time.

### **Can I drink alcohol?**

Alcohol increases the sedative effects of gabapentin, it is best not to drink alcohol when you start taking it. Once settled on a steady dose, you may drink alcohol in moderation but it may make you more drowsy than normal.

### **Can I drive?**

Gabapentin may cause drowsiness. If this happens, **do not** drive.

## What should I tell the doctor?

- If you are allergic to any drugs.
- If you are taking any other medicines or herbal medicines.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you are planning to become pregnant in the future.
- If you have a kidney problem.
- If you have or have had a history of excessive alcohol use, recreational drug use or addiction to prescribed or over-the-counter medication.

## What if I forget or miss a dose?

If you forget a dose then you can consider taking it when you remember that night but this may result in sleepiness the following day and affect your concentration, work or driving ability. The alternative is to wait until the next dose is scheduled.

However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your medication as normal. **Do not take two doses together.**

## What if I want to stop taking Gabapentin?

If you stop taking gabapentin suddenly, you might experience withdrawal symptoms. Speak to your healthcare professional (doctor, nurse, pharmacist) who will be able to supervise a gradual reduction.

**This information is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. We advise you to read the manufacturer's information for patients, which will be supplied by your pharmacist when your medicine is dispensed. Keep all medicines away from children, vulnerable adults or pets.**

Date	Morning	Lunch	Teatime	Night

**Further information:**

<https://fpm.ac.uk/about-pain-medicine/patients-and-relatives>



**If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service**

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

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