

Patient information

Gabapentin for Chronic Facial Pain

Liverpool University Dental Hospital

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about taking Gabapentin to treat your chronic facial pain. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is gabapentin?

Gabapentin is used to treat epilepsy or to treat nerve pain. Nerve pain can be caused by different illnesses, including diabetes and shingles, or it can happen after an injury. Sometimes, gabapentin is used to treat migraine headaches. Gabapentin is only available on prescription. It comes as capsules, tablets, and a liquid that you drink. It is normal to take gabapentin three times a day. You don't need to have epilepsy for gabapentin to help with pain or migraine.

Taking an unlicensed medicine

The use of gabapentin for treating chronic facial pain is unlicensed, which means that the manufacturer of the medicine has not specified it can be used in this way. However, there is evidence that it works to treat this particular condition.

How do I take the medicine?

Swallow gabapentin capsules and tablets whole with a drink of water or juice. Do not chew them. You can take gabapentin with or without food.

Try to space your doses evenly through the day. For example, first thing in the morning, early afternoon and at bedtime. To prevent side effects, your doctor will prescribe a low dose to start with and then increase it over a few weeks.

Once you find a dose that suits you, it'll usually stay the same. The maximum dose is 1200mg three times a day, although not everyone needs to take the maximum dose

How much will I take?

| Week | Morning | Midday | Evening |
|---------------|---------|--------|---------|
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 300mg |
| 2 | 300mg | 0 | 300mg |
| 3 | 300mg | 300mg | 300mg |
| 4 | 300mg | 300mg | 600mg |
| 5 | 600mg | 300mg | 600mg |
| 6 | 600mg | 600mg | 600mg |
| 7-14 | 600mg | 600mg | 800mg |
| 15-21 | 800mg | 600mg | 800mg |
| 22-28 | 800mg | 800mg | 800mg |
| 29-31 onwards | 800mg | 1200mg | 800mg |

What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is within two hours of the next dose, it is better to leave out the missed dose and take your next dose as normal. Never take two doses at the same time. Never take an extra dose to make up for a forgotten one. If you often forget doses, it may help to set an alarm to remind you. You could also ask your pharmacist for advice on other ways to help you remember to take your medicine.

Are there any side effects?

Like all medicines, gabapentin can cause side effects in some people, but many people have no side effects or only minor ones.

Common side effects

These common side effects may happen in more than 1 in 100 people. They're usually mild and go away by themselves. Keep taking the medicine, but talk to your doctor if these side effects bother you or don't go away:

- feeling sleepy, tired or dizzy
- feeling sick (nausea)
- being sick (vomiting) and diarrhoea
- getting more infections than usual
- mood changes
- swollen arms and legs
- blurred vision
- dry mouth
- difficulties for men getting an erection
- weight gain - gabapentin can make you feel hungry

- memory problems
- headaches

Serious side effects

Very few people taking gabapentin have serious problems.

Call your GP or go to the Emergency Department (A&E) straight away if you have a serious side effect, including:

- thoughts of harming or killing yourself - a small number of people taking gabapentin have had suicidal thoughts, which can happen after only a week of treatment
- yellowing of your skin or whites of your eyes - these may be warning signs of jaundice
- unusual bruises or bleeding - these may be warning signs of a blood disorder
- long-lasting stomach pain, nausea (feeling sick) or vomiting (being sick) - these may be warning signs of an inflamed pancreas
- muscle pain or weakness and you're having dialysis treatment because of kidney failure
- hallucinations.

Serious allergic reaction

In rare cases, it is possible to have a serious allergic reaction to gabapentin. Contact your GP or go to the Emergency Department straight away if:

- you get a skin rash that may include itchy, red, swollen, blistered or peeling skin
- you're wheezing, you get tightness in the chest or throat
- you have trouble breathing or talking
- your mouth, face, lips, tongue or throat start swelling

These are not all the side effects of gabapentin. For a full list see the leaflet inside your medicine packet. You can report any suspected side effect to the UK safety scheme, at w: <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>.

Is there anything else I need to know?

There is a risk that you may become dependent on gabapentin while taking it. Withdrawal symptoms (nervousness, mood disturbances, flu-like symptoms) have been seen when treatment is stopped suddenly. If you have been taking gabapentin for some time and want to stop, your hospital doctor or GP will recommend that you reduce your dose slowly to avoid the risk of these effects.

Gabapentin is not generally recommended in pregnancy. There's no firm evidence that it is harmful to an unborn baby but, for safety, pregnant women are usually advised to take it only if the benefits of the medicine outweigh the risks. Usually, you can breastfeed while taking gabapentin.

There aren't usually any problems mixing gabapentin with other medicines. Some indigestion remedies (antacids) reduce the amount of gabapentin that the body absorbs so it may not work as well. To stop this happening, take the antacid at least two hours before or after your dose of gabapentin.

How do I get a repeat prescription?

Your GP will give you a repeat prescription for gabapentin, which you can take to your local pharmacy. Please make sure you request your repeat prescription early enough so that you don't run out or risk missing any doses of your medication.

Useful sources of information

NHS website, [w:www.nhs.uk/medicines/gabapentin-for-pain/](http://www.nhs.uk/medicines/gabapentin-for-pain/)

For further information about the potential risks and side effects, please read the information leaflet supplied by the manufacturer within the box. Alternatively, please contact the Oral Medicine Department. The department is open Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Oral Medicine Department

The department is open Monday to Friday

9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

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