



North of Tyne
Area Prescribing Committee

Gabapentin slow dose increase Patient Information Leaflet

Information for Primary Care April 2015
(Review Date April 2016)

Patient information

The information in this leaflet is to guide your use of gabapentin safely. Further information is available inside the medication packaging. Some medicines used to treat pain symptoms are used for other health reasons. For example some medicines used to treat epilepsy can help to improve nerve pain. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will explain the reason why you are taking your medicine and what to expect.

What is gabapentin for?

- Gabapentin is a medicine which may help improve your pain control. It is different from other pain relievers. It is especially good for nerve pain, for example shooting or burning pains.
- Gabapentin is also used to treat epilepsy, but you have been prescribed it to improve pain control.

How should I take gabapentin?

- Please take gabapentin as per the chart on the other side of this leaflet. Do not stop taking this medication without advice from your GP.
- Once your pain has improved to an acceptable level, continue to take gabapentin at the dose you have reached.
- Gabapentin can be taken with or without food. If you are taking any indigestion remedies, leave two hours between taking these and your gabapentin.
- Swallow the capsules with a drink of water.

Are there any side effects?

- All medicines can sometimes cause side effects. If you are worried, you can talk to your doctor, district nurse or pharmacist.
- The most common side effects of this drug are dry mouth dizziness and drowsiness. A small number of people may feel sick or have constipation or diarrhoea. Most of these side effects will improve after several days, so it is worth carrying on with the gabapentin.

How to manage side effects

- Dry mouth - drink more **non**-alcoholic drinks, chewing also increases saliva in the mouth.

A common side effect of this drug is drowsiness. If you are drowsy you must not drive or operate machinery.

Drinking alcohol may make you more drowsy. Restrict your alcohol intake to 1-2 units per day (1 unit= ½ pint beer or lager a small glass of wine or a measure of spirit)

How long will I take gabapentin for?

You will probably need to take this medicine for as long as you have the pain.

Other treatments or pain killers may also help your pain and the dose of gabapentin may need to be reduced.

Please do not stop gabapentin suddenly. It needs to be reduced gradually **over 4 weeks**. Please discuss with your doctor before stopping.

Storage instructions

As with all medicines, keep them in a safe place away from children.

Starting dose

Follow these instructions when first starting gabapentin. Slowly increasing the dose should lead to fewer side effects.

Slow dosing increase using 100mg capsules:

	Morning	Night
Day 1		ONE (100mg)
Day 4		TWO (200mg)
Day 7		THREE (300mg)
Day 10	ONE (100mg)	THREE (300mg)
Day 13	TWO (200mg)	THREE (300mg)
Day 16	THREE (300mg)	THREE (300mg)

Once your pain is controlled your doctor, do not increase your dose. If you have any problems at any time, drop back to the previous dose.

Once your pain is controlled, your doctor will give you capsules of the appropriate strength so that you don't have to take more capsules than you need

Should you wish to ask any further questions about your medication please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist