**Pregabalin Dose Reduction Plan and Patient Information Leaflet**

This leaflet contains information to help answer any questions you may have about the Pregabalin Reduction that your GP discussed with you.

**Why have I been asked to reduce my medication?**

You have been asked to reduce your pregabalin medication as there are new safety concerns around the use of high dose Pregabalin and the risk of breathing difficulties, which means struggling for breath. This can happen while you are asleep, and in some cases, may cause death. The risk is higher in patients who are:

* over 65 years,
* have any breathing problems such as asthma, COPD or sleep apnoea
* have poor kidney function when the kidneys do not work as well as they should
* have any with neurological disease such as Alzheimer’s disease, brain tumours, epilepsy and seizures
* and those taking any medication which may cause sedation, including opiates such as morphine, dihydrocodeine and codeine

If you have found in the past that you have needed to keep increasing your dose this may be a sign that you have become tolerant of the medication, or the medication is not working for you. It is also important that if you have taken Pregabalin long term should have a trial withdrawl every 6 months. Even people who think they might be better taking pregabalin should reduce the dose from time to time, to see if the medication really is helping or if they get the same benefit on a smaller dose.

If you are pregnant or wishing to become pregnant please let your GP know as soon as possible to discuss your options.

**What side effects can my medication cause?**

Although gabapentinoids may be beneficial for pain relief, they do have side effects and risks**.** These side effects include

* sedation (making you feel sleepy),
* Dizziness, problems walking which increases your risk of a fall
* weight gain,
* mood changes (depression, anxiety, different thoughts),
* hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not actually there),
* sexual dysfunction and
* changes in your ability to fight infection.

**How will my reduction work?**

Your doctor will document an individualised dose reduction plan for you when you discuss what would work best for you at the review of your persistent pain. This plan should be included with this leaflet. Changes can be agreed to be made weekly, fortnightly, or monthly. You should not reduce your pregabalin dose more frequently than once a week unless advised and supervised by a medical professional. Reducing too quickly can also make you feel unwell, so if you have any symptoms, you think are linked to lowering your pregabalin dose then speak to your doctor.

Your GP will review you every 4-8 weeks depending on your reduction regime. However, if you have any problems, please contact Carlisle Healthcare Prescribing Voicemail service and leave a message. The voicemails are listened to every day. Tel Number 01228

**How will I get my medication?**

Your prescription will automatically be sent to the chemist each week, fortnight or month depending on how frequently you normally get your medication. You do not need to order this medication. The surgery will move the item to “Acute” issue which means you will no longer be able to see this medication on any of the patient access apps.

**How will any withdrawal symptoms be managed?**

Withdrawal symptoms can be unpleasant so reducing the dose slowly is important to minimise this. Our reduction plans are designed to be slow, safe and manageable. Examples of symptoms that you may experience are anxiety, difficulty with sleeping, feeling sick, pain or sweating. Withdrawal symptoms may occur within a day and last up to seven days. If you experience withdrawal effects, then do not reduce further. Keep on the dose that you have reduced to and wait for the withdrawal effects to stop before reducing further. Reducing at a slower rate or by smaller amounts may be helpful to minimise withdrawal effects

At any point in the dose reduction process, you can discuss how you are feeling and any changes you want to make to the pace of dose reduction with your GP. Changes can then be made to best support you in reducing your pregabalin dose to a safer level. Any reduction is likely to be good for your general health and wellbeing.

*Warning: Withdrawal symptoms sometimes cause people to seek gabapentinoids from non-medical sources such as buying off medication off other people, which can be dangerous. There is also a risk of overdose or death if a higher dose of gabapentin or pregabalin is taken following dose reduction as tolerance is reduced. Do not go back to a higher dose of gabapentin or pregabalin after your dose has been reduced unless your GP tells you to. Going back to a higher dose can be very dangerous.*

**Are there other ways of managing my pain apart from medicines?**

Yes! There are lots of new approaches to pain relief apart from medicines. These new approaches to pain self-management are helping people regain a better quality of life. Many of these are things you can do yourself. GPs and pain specialists are increasingly supporting patients to adopt these new ways to manage their persistent pain.

To find out more, go to **www.my.livewellwithpain.co.uk** or **www.paintoolkit.org** and check out some of the ideas and techniques. We can help you with these. If you’d like to know more, talk to our healthcare team.

Carlisle Healthcare are proud to work with the Flippin Pain Campaign. The website has videos, podcasts and lots of the latest hints, tips and advice on how to take back control of your pain. [www.flippinpain.co.uk](http://www.flippinpain.co.uk).