

Gabapentinoids

To relieve pain



Your doctor has prescribed gabapentinoids for you. The purpose of this treatment is to relieve pain caused, among other things, by a damaged nerve (e.g. sensation of burning or electric shock, sharp pains).

Gabapentin (Neurontin) and pregabalin (Lyrica) are two antiepileptic drugs that are highly effective for relieving different types of pain, including migraine.

How is this medication taken?

Gabapentinoids are available in tablets or capsules to be swallowed. The initial doses are often low. Doses can be increased gradually, according to the doctor's recommendations. Generally, gabapentin is prescribed 3 or 4 times a day and pregabalin 2 to 3 times a day.

The pain gradually decreases within a week or two after the start of treatment. It's important to take your medication regularly and to respect the prescribed dose.

Never stop taking your medication from one day to the next, as you could experience withdrawal symptoms (trouble sleeping, nausea, headaches, anxiety, etc.). Talk with your doctor about it first.

How long does this treatment go on?

Gabapentinoids are used to relieve persistent pain. The treatment can go on for months or years. Gabapentinoids are taken alone or in combination with other drugs.

What are the side effects?

Gabapentinoids can cause:

- dry mouth
- increased appetite
- swelling of the legs or feet
- drowsiness (wanting to sleep)
- concentration or memory problems
- dizziness or balance problems

The fatigue of the first few days decreases as your body gets used to the medication. Most side effects diminish over time.

Tell your doctor if you have kidney failure.



Could I become addicted to gabapentinoids?

These drugs can sometimes lead to physical dependence. This means that if you stop taking them suddenly, you could have unpleasant physical sensations.

Psychological dependence is rare. It occurs mainly in people who have problems with drug use (for example, who don't follow instructions and respect prescribed doses).

Can I drink alcohol during the treatment?

Alcohol can intensify the effects of the treatment on the brain. That's why it's advisable to avoid or limit the intake of alcohol (and drinks containing it) when you're under the influence of gabapentinoids. **But be careful:** don't suddenly stop this treatment because you intend to drink alcohol (for example, during a night out).

Can I drive and do manual labour during the treatment?

Gabapentinoids can cause drowsiness. You may have difficulty driving a car or using certain tools.

Before driving again or operating dangerous tools, make sure you're functional and fully awake.



Can I take gabapentinoids while pregnant or breastfeeding?

Your doctor may recommend stopping the treatment if you're pregnant or breastfeeding your baby. The effect of gabapentinoids on pregnancy and breastfeeding is not well-known.

If you're pregnant or breastfeeding, or planning to become pregnant, tell your doctor.



Do I need to follow any special diet during the treatment?

No.

What happens if I take other medications or natural products?

Some drugs or natural products can change the effect of gabapentinoids. For example, any drug that causes drowsiness may increase the tranquilizing effect of gabapentinoids. It's always best to talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking other products. He or she will make sure to avoid interactions, either by changing the time you take your medication or by offering you another product.

What should I do if I forget to take a dose?

Take it as soon as possible. However, if it's almost time for the next dose, wait until the usual time.

Don't double the dose.

Where should I store my medication?



Store it in a safe place, away from children. Medications are sensitive to heat and humidity. Don't store them in the kitchen or bathroom.

What should I do in case of an emergency or overdose?

Important: Go to the emergency room. For immediate assistance, call **9-1-1**.



REMEMBER

You can manage your pain!

How? By doing:

- light activities
- progressive exercises
- relaxation techniques
- your favourite hobbies and pastimes



Eat well to maintain a healthy weight. Sleep enough to feel rested. Take your medications as prescribed.



For your health and that of your loved ones, never take someone else's medication and never share yours.

Who should I contact for help or to ask questions?

If you have questions about the medication, ask your pharmacist or nurse. Otherwise, ask your doctor at your next appointment.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Québec Association of Chronic Pain:

> douleurchronique.org

Canadian Pain Society:

> canadianpainsociety.ca

Société Française d'Étude et de Traitement de la Douleur:

> sfetd-douleur.org

International Association for the Study of Pain:

> iasp-pain.org

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our web site

chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca



Questions

Write down any questions you want to ask your care team so you don't forget anything.





Observations - Comments

Write down observations you feel are important: your symptoms, treatments, follow-up, energy level, spirit, etc.





Upcoming appointments

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