

Gabapentin capsules

Gabapentin 100 mg, 300 mg and 400 mg capsules

What is in this leaflet

This leaflet answers some common questions about Gabapentin.

It does not contain all the available information.

It does not take the place of talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

All medicines have risks and benefits. Your doctor has weighed the risks of you taking Gabapentin against the benefits it is expected to have for you.

If you have any concerns about taking this medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Keep this leaflet with the medicine.

You may need to read it again.

What Gabapentin is used for

What Gabapentin does

Gabapentin is used to control epilepsy. Epilepsy is a condition where you have repeated seizures (fits). There are many different types of seizures, ranging from mild to severe.

Gabapentin is also used to treat neuropathic pain, a type of pain caused by damage to the nerves.

This medicine belongs to a group of medicines called anticonvulsants.

How Gabapentin works

This medicine is thought to work by controlling brain chemicals which send signals to nerves to help control seizures or neuropathic pain.

Gabapentin also has pain relieving effects.

Your doctor may have prescribed gabapentin in addition to other medicines that you may be taking. This may be necessary if your current treatment is no longer working as well.

Your doctor may have prescribed gabapentin for another reason.

Gabapentin may lead to dependence on this medicine.

Ask your doctor if you have any questions about why gabapentin has been prescribed for you.

This medicine is available only with a doctor's prescription.

Use in children

There is not enough information to recommend the use of this medicine in children:

- under the age of 3 years to control epilepsy, or
- under the age of 18 years to treat neuropathic pain.

Before you take it

When you must not take it

Do not take gabapentin if you have an allergy to:

- any medicine containing gabapentin, the active ingredient in gabapentin
- any of the ingredients listed at the end of this leaflet.

Some of the symptoms of an allergic reaction may include:

- shortness of breath
- wheezing or difficulty breathing
- swelling of the face, lips, tongue or other parts of the body
- rash, itching or hives on the skin.

Do not take gabapentin after the expiry date printed on the pack or if the packaging is torn or shows signs of tampering.

If it has expired or is damaged, return it to your pharmacist for disposal.

If you are not sure whether you should start taking gabapentin, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

Before you start to take it

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you have allergies to:

- any other medicines, especially barbiturates or any other anticonvulsant medicines
- any other substances, such as foods, preservatives or dyes.

Tell your doctor if you have or have had any of the following medical conditions:

- kidney problems
- mixed seizure disorders that include absence seizures.

Tell your doctor if you have a history of drug abuse and/or psychiatric disorders.

Gabapentin poses risks of abuse and dependence. Your body may become used to you taking gabapentin and this may result in physical dependence. It means that you may experience withdrawal symptoms if you stop taking gabapentin suddenly. So it is important to strictly follow the directions given by your doctor.

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.

Gabapentin may affect your developing baby if you take it during pregnancy. However, it is very important to control your fits while you are pregnant. If it is necessary for you to take gabapentin, your doctor can help you decide whether or not to take it during pregnancy.

Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.

Gabapentin passes into breast milk. The effect on your breast-fed baby is unknown.

If you do breast-feed, watch your baby carefully.

If your baby develops a skin rash, becomes sleepy or has unusual symptoms, don't breast-feed again until you speak to your doctor.

Your doctor can discuss the risks and benefits of breast-feeding with you.

If you have not told your doctor or pharmacist about any of the above, tell them before you start taking gabapentin.

Taking other medicines

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicines, including:

- all prescription medicines
- all medicines, vitamins, herbal supplements or natural therapies you buy without a prescription from a pharmacy, supermarket, naturopath or health food shop.

Some medicines may be affected by gabapentin or may affect how well it works. You may need different amounts of your medicines, or you may need to take different medicines. Your doctor or pharmacist will advise you accordingly.

Gabapentin and certain other medicines may influence each other.

Using gabapentin with other medicines that can make you feel drowsy, such as sleeping tablets and other pain relievers (e.g. benzodiazepines and opioids), antihistamines, antidepressants, antipsychotics, cannabis, and alcohol may result in severe drowsiness, decreased awareness, breathing problems, coma and death.

Your doctor will minimise the dose and duration of use; and monitor you for signs and symptoms of breathing difficulties and sedation.

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any of the following:

- cimetidine, a medicine used to treat stomach or duodenal ulcers
- antacids, medicines used to treat heartburn or reflux
- opioids, medicines used to treat severe pain e.g. morphine.

Your doctor and pharmacist have more information on medicines to be careful with or avoid while taking gabapentin.

How to take it

Follow all directions given to you by your doctor or pharmacist carefully.

They may differ from the information contained in this leaflet.

If you do not understand the instructions on the pack, ask your doctor or pharmacist for help.

How much to take

Your doctor will tell you how many capsules you need to take each day. This may depend on your age, your condition and whether or not you are taking any other medicines.

Your doctor may recommend that you start with a low dose of gabapentin and slowly increase the dose to the lowest amount needed to control your epilepsy/convulsions or neuropathic pain.

How to take it

Swallow gabapentin capsules whole with a full glass of water.

When to take it

Take gabapentin capsules at about the same time each day.

Taking gabapentin at the same time each day will have the best effect. It will also help you remember when to take the capsules.

If you are taking gabapentin three times a day, do not allow more than 12 hours between doses.

It does not matter if you take gabapentin before or after food.

How long to take it

Continue taking your medicine for as long as your doctor tells you to.

Gabapentin helps control your condition, but does not cure it. Therefore you must take your medicine every day, even if you feel well.

Do not stop taking gabapentin, or lower the dose, without checking with your doctor. Do not let yourself run out of medicine over the weekend or holidays.

Stopping gabapentin suddenly may worsen your condition or increase your chance of experiencing withdrawal symptoms, such as sleeplessness, headache, nausea (feeling sick), anxiety or excessive sweating. If appropriate, your doctor will slowly reduce your dose before you can stop taking it completely.

If you forget to take it

If it is almost time for your next dose (within 4 hours), skip the dose you missed and take your next dose when you are meant to.

Otherwise, take it as soon as you remember, and then go back to taking gabapentin as you would normally.

Do not take a double dose to make up for the dose that you missed.

This may increase the chance of you getting an unwanted side effect.

If you are not sure what to do, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

If you have trouble remembering to take gabapentin, ask your pharmacist for help.

If you take too much (overdose)

Immediately telephone your doctor or the National Poisons Centre (telephone 0800 POISON or 0800 764 766) for advice, or go to Accident and Emergency at the nearest hospital, if you think that you or anyone else may have taken too much gabapentin.

Do this even if there are no signs of discomfort or poisoning.

You may need urgent medical attention.

Symptoms of an overdose may include you falling unconscious, feeling drowsy, weak, unsteady when walking, having double vision, slurred speech or diarrhoea.

While you are taking it

Things you must do

If you are about to be started on any new medicine, remind your doctor and pharmacist that you are taking gabapentin.

Tell any other doctors, dentists, and pharmacists who treat you that you are taking gabapentin.

If you are going to have surgery or emergency treatment, tell the surgeon or anaesthetist that you are taking gabapentin.

Tell your doctor immediately if you have any thoughts of suicide or self-harm, any unusual changes in mood or behaviour, or show signs of depression.

Some people being treated with anti-epileptics, such as gabapentin, have had thoughts of harming or killing themselves.

Patients and caregivers should be alert and monitor for signs and symptoms of suicide, these include:

- thoughts or talk of death or suicide
- thoughts or talk of self-harm or harm to others
- any recent attempts of self-harm
- new or an increase in aggressive behaviour, irritability or agitation
- new onset of or worsening of depression.

Mention of suicide or violence must be taken seriously.

If you or someone you know is demonstrating these warning signs and symptoms of suicide while taking gabapentin, contact your doctor or a mental health professional right away.

Tell your doctor if you feel gabapentin is not helping your condition.

Your doctor may need to change your medicine.

Tell your doctor if, for any reason, you have not taken gabapentin exactly as prescribed.

Otherwise, your doctor may change your treatment unnecessarily.

If you become pregnant while taking gabapentin, tell your doctor immediately.

If you need to have any medical tests while you are taking gabapentin, tell your doctor.

It may interfere with the results of some tests.

If you are going to have any surgery or procedure, including dental surgery, tell your surgeon, doctor or dentist that you are taking this medicine.

Keep all of your doctor's appointments so that your progress can be checked.

Your doctor will check your progress and may want to take some tests from time to time. This helps to prevent unwanted side effects.

Things you must not do

Do not take gabapentin to treat any other complaints unless your doctor tells you to.

Do not give gabapentin to anyone else, even if their symptoms seem similar to yours or they have the same condition as you.

Do not stop taking gabapentin or lower the dose without checking with your doctor.

Stopping Gabapentin suddenly, if you have epilepsy, may cause unwanted side effects or make your condition worse. Your doctor will slowly reduce your dose before you can stop taking it completely.

Things to be careful of

Be careful driving or operating machinery until you know how gabapentin affects you.

As with other anticonvulsant medicines, gabapentin may cause drowsiness, dizziness, light-headedness or sleepiness in some people. Make sure you know how you react to gabapentin before you drive a car, operate machinery, or do anything else that could be dangerous if you are dizzy or light-headed. If this occurs do not drive.

Children should not ride a bike, climb trees or do anything else that could be dangerous if they are feeling drowsy or sleepy.

Be careful when drinking alcohol while you are taking gabapentin.

Combining gabapentin and alcohol can make you more sleepy, dizzy or light-headed. Your doctor may suggest you avoid alcohol while you are being treated with gabapentin.

Side effects

Tell your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible if you do not feel well while you are taking gabapentin.

All medicines can have side effects. Sometimes these are serious, but most of the time these are not. You may need medical attention if you get some side effects.

It can be difficult to tell whether side effects are the result of taking gabapentin; of your condition; or side effects of other medicines you may be taking, for this reason it is important to tell your doctor of any change in your condition.

If you are over 65 years of age you may have an increased chance of getting side effects.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist to answer any questions you may have.

If you get any side effects, do not stop taking gabapentin without first talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

Tell your doctor if...

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you notice any of the following and they worry you:

- dizziness* or light-headedness
- feeling tired or drowsy*
- unfriendliness*
- unusually overactive*
- forgetfulness, loss of concentration or confusion
- difficulty speaking
- changes in your weight*
- constipation, diarrhoea
- nausea and/or vomiting*, indigestion
- dry mouth, red swollen gums
- muscle pain or cramps, back pain
- swelling of the hands or feet
- runny or blocked nose
- fever*
- bronchitis*, lung infection*
- sore throat and discomfort when swallowing, coughing.

The above list includes the more common side effects of gabapentin.

They are usually mild and short-lived.

Tell your doctor as soon as possible if..

Tell your doctor as soon as possible if you notice any of the following:

- weakness, unsteadiness when walking including falling, reduced co-ordination or slowed reactions
- unusual changes in mood* or behaviour such as restlessness, nervousness, or excitement
- signs of new onset of, or increased irritability or agitation
- signs of depression
- seeing or hearing things that are not there, irrational thinking
- blurred or double vision, uncontrollable jerky eye movements, difficulty seeing
- signs of frequent infections such as fever, severe chills, sore throat or mouth ulcers.
- trouble breathing or shallow breaths (respiratory depression)
- loss of consciousness

The side effects in the above lists marked * have been specifically reported in children taking gabapentin.

Go to hospital if...

Tell your doctor immediately or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital if you notice any of the following:

- more frequent or more severe seizures (fits)
- chest pain, a very fast heart rate
- sudden signs of allergy such as rash, itching or hives, fever, swollen lymph glands, swelling of the face, lips, tongue or other parts of the body, shortness of breath, wheezing or difficulty breathing.

The above list includes very serious side effects. You may need urgent medical attention or hospitalisation. These side effects are very rare.

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you notice anything else that is making you feel unwell.

Other side effects not listed above may also occur in some people.

Some of these side effects (for example, changes in thyroid function, structures of bones, high cholesterol, levels of sugar in your blood or blood pressure) can only be found when your doctor does blood tests from time to time to check your progress.

Do not be alarmed by the list of possible side effects.

You may not experience any of them.

After taking Gabapentin

Storage

Keep your capsules in the pack until it is time to take them.

If you take the capsules out of the pack they may not keep well.

Keep your capsules in a cool dry place where the temperature stays below 25°C.

Do not store the capsules or any other medicine in the bathroom or near a sink. Do not leave it on a window sill or in the car.

Heat and dampness can destroy some medicines.

Keep it where children cannot reach it.

A locked cupboard at least one-and-a-half metres above the ground is a good place to store medicines.

Disposal

If your doctor or pharmacist tells you to stop taking gabapentin or the expiry date has passed, ask your pharmacist what to do with any medicine that is left over.

Product description

What it looks like

- 100 mg capsule: White hard capsule, imprinted “100”
- 300 mg capsule: Yellow hard capsule, imprinted with “300”
- 400 mg capsule: Orange hard capsule, imprinted with “400”.

Each blister pack contains 100 capsules.

Ingredients

Active ingredient

Gabapentin

Other ingredients:

Capsule fill:

Lactose monohydrate

Purified talc

Maize starch

100 mg capsule shell

Gelatin

Titanium dioxide

300 mg capsule shell

Gelatin

Titanium dioxide

Iron oxide yellow

400 mg capsule shell

Gelatin

Titanium dioxide

Iron oxide yellow Iron oxide red

Printing ink

Shellac

Iron oxide black

Propylene glycol

Ammonium hydroxide.

Sponsor Details

Gabapentin capsules are supplied in New Zealand by:

Max Health Ltd
PO Box 44452
Pt Chevalier, Auckland 1246

Telephone: (09) 815 2664.

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