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216032 or [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)



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# Pain Service

## Patient Information

### Frequently asked questions about Gabapentin for pain relief

## Document history

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Contact number	01223 217796
Publish/Review date	January 2011/January 2014 (minor amendment made September 2011)
File name	FAQs_about_Gabapentin_pain_relief
Version number/Ref	3/PIN1292

## **Why do I need Gabapentin?**

Gabapentin is a drug used to treat nerve pain. This type of pain is often not relieved by normal painkillers. Gabapentin can be used in combination with other painkillers to improve your pain relief.

## **How does Gabapentin work?**

Gabapentin works by changing the way in which nerves send messages to your brain. When something presses on a nerve, or a nerve doesn't work properly in some way, the nerve can send false messages to your brain. The brain thinks that a part of your body is being hurt when it is not. This makes you actually feel pain. Gabapentin may reduce your pain by altering the way nerves work.

## **Isn't Gabapentin used for treating Epilepsy?**

Yes, Gabapentin is used for treating epilepsy. Epilepsy is also caused by nerves sending false messages, but this time to the muscles. Research has shown that Gabapentin is also effective in helping to relieve certain types of pain.

## **How long will Gabapentin take to work?**

You should notice that your pain starts to improve a few weeks after starting Gabapentin, but it may take longer in some people. However, some people may feel the benefit straight away.

## **Is it safe for me to drive whilst I'm taking Gabapentin?**

Gabapentin may cause drowsiness. If you feel affected by this, we advise that you should not drive until the effects have worn off.

### **Remember:**

Never give your prescribed tablets to other people as they may not be safe for them to take. Any leftover tablets should be taken to your local pharmacy for safe disposal.

## **Keep all medicines out of reach of children**

### **Additional information**

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace the advice given to you by your doctor or the pain service looking after you. If you require more information or have any questions, please speak to your GP or contact the Pain Clinic.

Telephone number: 01223 217796

## **How long will I have to take Gabapentin for?**

If the Gabapentin is helpful, you will be asked to continue with it for at least two to three months. Your use of this medication will be reviewed by your doctor and nurses at the Pain Clinic as well as by your GP. You may be given the first prescription for Gabapentin by the doctor at the Pain Clinic however further prescriptions should be obtained from your GP. There is no possibility of you becoming addicted to Gabapentin, however it is best not to abruptly stop this medication if you have been taking it for a few months. It is also important that you continue to take your other regular painkillers, unless you have been advised to stop taking these by your doctor.

## **How should I take Gabapentin?**

You should take Gabapentin in addition to your current tablets unless told otherwise. Gabapentin is started at a low dose and increased gradually to minimize any side effects.

You should take your Gabapentin as shown in the table. If your pain completely disappears with a lower dose, you can stay on that dose rather than increasing to the next dose.

Date	Dose		
	Morning	Lunch	Night

### Do I need any tests whilst I'm taking Gabapentin?

No, you will not need any special checks whilst you are taking Gabapentin.

### Are there any side effects?

All drugs have side effects, but they do not happen in all the people who take them. The most common side effects of Gabapentin are:

- drowsiness
- dizziness
- weakness
- tiredness

Other possible side effects are detailed in the drug information sheet supplied with the tablets.

If you have any troublesome side effects from Gabapentin, speak to the doctor, nurse or pain service straight away. Side effects from Gabapentin usually reduce or disappear after taking the same dose for a few days.

### Is it safe for me to take other medicines whilst I'm receiving treatment with Gabapentin?

Before you take or buy any new medicines, including herbal remedies, tell your doctor or pharmacist that you are taking Gabapentin and ask their advice.

If you are taking any indigestion remedies, avoid taking them **two hours before** and **up to two hours after** your Gabapentin dose.

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

You should take a missed dose as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your medication as normal. **Do not** try to 'double up' to make up for your missed dose.

### Can I drink alcohol whilst taking Gabapentin?

If the Gabapentin makes you feel tired or gives you other side effects, then drinking alcohol may increase these side effects. Because of this, we advise you to avoid drinking alcohol if these side effects are troublesome.