



Gabapentin and Pregabalin

What are they?

Gabapentin and Pregabalin may be used to treat painful conditions that have not responded to other treatments. They are different from other painkillers as they will not work immediately, and may take up to a month or longer to reach their full effect. They are particularly helpful for pain relating to nerve irritation or damage.

How do they work?

They help to dampen down the activity in the nerves that are irritated or damaged in the pelvis.

How are they taken?

You will usually start at a lower dose and increase, as directed by your doctor or nurse, until you reach the dose that is right for you. This can be done either quickly or slowly. If you have trouble swallowing the capsules whole, they can be opened and their contents sprinkled on to food or dissolved in water. This medicine may be taken either with food or on an empty stomach.

What if I forget a dose?

Take it as soon as you remember. If it is nearly time for your next dose DO NOT double up; just miss the dose you forgot.

How long should I take them for?

You can take this medicine for as long as you need it. Do not stop taking this medicine without speaking to your doctor. It needs to be reduced gradually.

What are the side effects?

You may experience dizziness and drowsiness—if this happens do not drive or operate machinery. Other side effects include increased appetite, weight gain, changes in mood, vertigo, dry mouth, constipation, vomiting, difficulty with vision and tremor. Most of these side effects will improve after a few weeks, so it is worth carrying on with the Pregabalin.

Pregnancy

You should not take Gabapentin or Pregabalin if you are pregnant or breast-feeding.

If you are a woman planning a pregnancy you should speak to your doctor before taking Gabapentin or Pregabalin.

Other points to remember

- If the pain is improved before getting to the higher doses stay on the dose that helps
- If you have side effects when you increase a dose stay on the lower amount for a further week before trying again
- Your dose has to be smaller if you suffer from renal impairment (kidney disease)
- Neither Gabapentin nor Pregabalin are addictive
- The doctor has prescribed you the drugs for pain relief and not for epilepsy