AUSLON
MEDICAL GROUP

## Information for adult patients prescribed

# Gabapentin for the Treatment of Pain

## Why have I been prescribed Gabapentin?

- Gabapentin is used to treat some types of persistent pain.
- It is especially good for nerve pain, such as sharp, shooting, burning and stabbing types of pain.
- Gabapentin belongs to a group of medicines called anticonvulsants which are also used to treat epilepsy.
- You may notice that information from the manufacturer may not mention your type of pain.

## How does Gabapentin work?

- Gabapentin works by changing the way that nerves send messages to your brain. If the messages are reduced, then the pain will be reduced.

## When should I take it?

- Normally, the starting dose is small and may be taken between one and three times a day, but the dose will be gradually increased.
- You will be told how much to start taking and how to increase or decrease the dose based on pain relief and side effects. The table at the end of the leaflet will help you remember when to increase the dose.
- If you are taking antacid medication, it is best to wait for two hours after taking it, before taking Gabapentin.

## How is Gabapentin taken?

- The tablets should be swallowed whole, with a glass of water.
- Gabapentin may be taken on an empty or full stomach.
- Do not take more than prescribed.

## How long will it take to work?

- Every patient is different. You may notice some initial benefit within a few days, however it may take a little longer for a full effect. Your prescriber may need to increase the dose for Gabapentin to be effective. Do not increase the dose without consulting with your prescriber
- Gabapentin does not work for everyone. If you do not feel any improvement in your pain after 4-6 weeks, do not suddenly stop taking the tablets but speak to your doctor and/or pharmacist to discuss reducing and stopping the medication.

## What are the possible side effects?

- Most side effects are mild and it is expected that they will reduce after several days.
- Generally side effects are worse after starting taking Gabapentin or increasing the dose. It is important to persist in taking Gabapentin as these side effects usually wear off.
- Common side effects include; drowsiness, dizziness, fatigue and muscle tremor. If you have these side effects and they are severe contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice.
- Less common side effects include vision disturbances, indigestion, weight gain, leg swelling, memory loss, euphoria, mood changes or hallucinations and a rash. If any of these side effects occur contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice.
- Some people develop severe anxiety if they miss a dose and some take more than prescribed to help their symptoms. If you are worried this is happening to you, discuss it with your doctor.
- If you are taking Gabapentin with other medications such as opioids, care is required as the risks increase. Please speak to your doctor.

## Can I take this medication long-term?

- Yes, if it helps. You may wish to reduce treatment every so often, to check if your pain is still a problem. This should be done with the advice of your GP or pain specialist, gradually reducing your medication over a period of time.

## Can I drink alcohol?

- Alcohol increases the sedative effects of Gabapentin, it is best not to drink alcohol when taking it.

## Can I drive?

- Gabapentin may affect your ability to drive (e.g. drowsiness). The risk is increased if you take it along with other medications that have drowsiness as a side effect.
- If you feel any impairment, do not drive

## What should I tell the doctor/prescriber?

- If you are allergic to any drugs
- If you are taking any other medicines or herbal medicines
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you are planning to become pregnant in the future
- If you have a kidney problem
- If you have or have had a history of excessive alcohol use, recreational drug use or addiction to prescribed or over-the-counter medication
- If you are regularly taking strong opioid medications (e.g. Tramadol, Tapentadol, Morphine, Oxycodone, Fentanyl).

## What if I forget or miss a dose?

- If you forget a dose, consider taking it when you remember. However, this may result in some increased sleepiness and may affect your concentration, work or driving ability.
- Alternatively, you could wait until the next dose is scheduled and take your medication as normal.
- Do not take two doses together.

## What if I want to stop taking Gabapentin?

- Do not stop taking Gabapentin suddenly, you might experience withdrawal symptoms. Speak to your prescribing healthcare professional (doctor, nurse, pharmacist) who will be able to supervise a gradual reduction.

**This information is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. We advise you to read the manufacturer's information for patients, which will be supplied by your pharmacist when your medicine is dispensed. Keep all medicines away from children, vulnerable adults or pets.**

### Statement of Acknowledgement

- I, ....., confirm that I have read the information on Gabapentin provided in this form.

- Email address: .....

..... *E-Signature*

...../...../..... *Date*