

Pregabalin

Research has shown that pregabalin can help in managing neuropathic (nerve) pain. It works by reducing the number of signals sent through the nerves. This medication is also used for epilepsy.

Neuropathic pain is a type of pain that follows after damage to a nerve. It is thought to result from a “rewiring” of the nerves of the spinal cord. They are too sensitive and send too many pain signals. Normal touch can feel painful. There is often a “burning” or “shooting” feeling, or pins and needles. The pain can be there all the time or can come and go.

How to take pregabalin

The dose of pregabalin required varies from person to person. It should be taken regularly, usually, one capsule twice a day, with a gap of about 12 hours between doses. It can take up to 6-8 weeks to get the full benefit from pregabalin.

Pregabalin comes in different strengths. The usual starting dose is 75mg twice a day. Some people will get benefit at this dose but others may require a higher dose. The dose can be increased gradually to a maximum of 300mg twice a day.

How long should I take pregabalin for?

In general, pregabalin will have to be taken for as long as you are requiring nerve pain relief. It should be reviewed every 6-12 months. Sometimes if someone has been taking pregabalin for a long time it may not work as well or may no longer be needed. If you, your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist think this is happening they may help you reduce the dose slowly to see if you still need it.

Do not stop taking your pregabalin suddenly if you have been taking it for a while. Your body may become used to the pregabalin and stopping it suddenly could cause withdrawal symptoms.

Pregabalin has the potential to cause tolerance, dependence and addiction, although this is rare when taken as prescribed for chronic

pain. This is more likely if they are or have been dependent on other drugs, alcohol or nicotine. Speak to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist if you have any concerns.

Are there any side effects?

All medicines can cause side effects but not everyone will get them. There is a full list in the patient information sheet with your prescription.

Some side effects can be reduced by slowly building the dose. Others may pass after the first few doses. If side effects go on and become a problem or you have others not expected then speak to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist.

The most common side effects are drowsiness, dizziness, muscle fatigue and tremor. These side effects usually settle or reduce after a few days.

If pregabalin makes you feel drowsy you should avoid driving or operating machinery. It is a criminal offence to drive a vehicle whilst unsafe due to medication use. This might be worse when you start the tablets and each time your dose goes up. Alcohol may make the sleepiness worse and should be avoided where possible.

Less common side effects are visual disturbance, gastrointestinal upset, appetite changes, leg swelling, memory loss, mood changes or hallucinations and a rash. If you get these side effects contact your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist for advice.

If you experience any trouble breathing or are taking shallow breaths you should seek urgent medical help.

Other information

The dose of pregabalin may need to be reduced in people with kidney problems. It is recommended that you have a blood test to check your kidney function when taking pregabalin.

Medication in chronic pain

The benefit from taking medication should always be more than any side effects you may have. Only **you**

- know how bad your pain is
- are able to say if your medicine is helping
- know what side effects you are having

It may take a few weeks or several trials of different medications to find the best combination for you and your pain. It may help to keep a diary of your pain and other symptoms. Side effects often become less once you have been on a medicine for a few days.

Please read the patient information sheet given with each medication. It gives more information about the medicine and any side effects.

You can discuss your pain medication with your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist. They can give you advice on which pain medicines may help. They can help you find the best way to take your medicines. They can advise you on putting your dose up safely if your pain is worse and on taking less medication safely when your pain is less.

If your medicine is not helping you may not need to take it. Please talk to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist first. Some pain medicines should not be stopped suddenly.

Do not share or take other peoples medication. Always advise your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist about any other medication or products you are taking for chronic pain. This includes anything bought from the pharmacy, herbal supplements or non- prescribed medicines.

Understanding how your medications work may help you to get the best pain relief from it with the least side-effects.



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Patient Information Leaflet



GETTING YOU ON TRACK TO RECOVERY

NHS Fife provides accessible communication in a variety of formats including for people who are speakers of community languages, who require Easy Read versions, who speak BSL, read Braille or use Audio formats.

NHS Fife SMS text service number 07805800005 is available for people who have a hearing or speech impairment.

To find out more about accessible formats contact:
fife-UHB.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.net or phone 01592 729130