

Information for adult patients prescribed Pregabalin for pain

Why have I been prescribed this?

- Pregabalin is used to help reduce pain. It is especially good for nerve pain, such as burning, shooting, stabbing, pins and needles, crawling, electric shock like pain
- It belongs to a group of medicines called anticonvulsants and is also used to treat epilepsy and anxiety
- Gabapentin is another pain medication that works in a similar way to Pregabalin, they shouldn't be prescribed together

How does it work?

- Pregabalin 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 is taken two to three times a day. The dose is increased slowly, no more often than every 3-7 days
- Normally a minimum dose of 75mg twice a day is needed to get any benefit and the dose may need to be increased, by your GP, pharmacist or pain team, up to a maximum of 300mg twice a day
- In people whose kidneys are not working so well lower doses may be used and may be given only once a day, as Pregabalin can build up in the body
- If you are taking antacid medication, it is best to wait for two hours after taking it before taking Pregabalin

How should I take it?

- The capsule should be swallowed whole, with a glass of water. It can be taken with or without food

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 up to 1 month for a full effect. Your GP, pharmacist or pain team may need to increase the dose for it to be effective
- Pregabalin does not work for everyone. If you do not feel any improvement in your pain after 4 – 6 weeks, do not suddenly stop taking Pregabalin but speak to your GP, pharmacist or pain team to discuss reducing and stopping the medication

What if I forget or miss a dose?

- If you forget a dose then you can consider taking it when you remember that night but this may result in sleepiness the following day and affect your concentration, work or driving ability
- The alternative is to wait until the next dose is scheduled
- However, if it is almost time for your next dose (in the next 2 hours), skip the missed dose and take your medication as normal
- Do not take 2 doses together

Can I take it long term?

- Yes, if it helps. You may wish to reduce treatment every so often to see if your pain is still a problem. This should be done with the help of your GP, pharmacist or pain team and the dose should be reduced gradually

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 more troublesome just after starting Pregabalin or increasing the dose
- Common side effects include: drowsiness, dizziness, fatigue, headaches and muscle tremor. Contact your GP, pharmacist or pain team for advice if you experience these side effects and they are severe
- Less common side effects include: vision disturbances, indigestion, weight gain, leg swelling, memory loss, euphoria, mood changes, hallucinations or rash. If any of these side effects occur contact your GP, pharmacist or pain team for advice
- Some people experience severe anxiety if they miss a dose and some take more than prescribed to help their symptoms. Some people can become addicted to Pregabalin. If you are worried this is happening to you, speak to your GP, pharmacist or pain team

Tips to help manage side effects

- Headaches – Make sure you rest and drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids. Headaches should go away after the first week of taking Pregabalin. Seek advice from your GP, pharmacist or pain team if they last longer or are severe
- Feeling sleepy/ tired/ dizzy - If this doesn't wear off within 1-2 weeks your doctor may need to reduce your dose or increase it more slowly. If that doesn't work Pregabalin may have to be switched to a different medication
- Swollen hands, arms, legs and feet – if your feet are swollen try sitting with your feet up on a chair or bed, try not to stand for a long time. Exercise might help if your arms are swollen. Speak to your GP, pharmacist or pain team for advice
- Weight gain – Pregabalin can increase your appetite. Do not snack on high calorie foods. If you are hungry in between meals eat fruit, vegetables and low calorie foods. Regular exercise will help keep your weight stable

Can I drink alcohol?

- Pregabalin can affect how the brain and spinal cord work, resulting in drowsiness, sedation, and potentially fatal breathing difficulties, the risk is increased when drinking alcohol and taking certain medications such as opioids. Alcohol increases the sedative effects of Pregabalin, it is best not to drink alcohol when you start taking it and when increasing the dose. Once settled on a steady dose, you may drink alcohol in moderation but it may make you more drowsy than normal

Can I drive?

- Pregabalin may cause drowsiness. If this happens, do not drive. For further information on driving visit <https://www.gov.uk/drug-driving-law>

What should I tell my doctor/ pharmacist/ pain team?

- If you are allergic to any drugs
- If you are taking any other medicines or herbal medicines
- If you are pregnant or breast feeding, 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

What if I want to stop taking it?

- Do not stop taking Pregabalin suddenly as this can cause withdrawal symptoms including anxiety, difficulty sleeping, feeling sick and sweating. There is also a risk of seizures. The dose should be reduced gradually with the help of your GP, pharmacist or pain team

Further information: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/pregabalin/>