

Patient Name: _____ **Date:** _____
Doctor Name: _____ **Emergency Number:** _____
Pharmacy: _____ **Number:** _____

What is Gabapentin?

Gabapentin (also known as Neurontin) is a medicine that has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat partial and secondary generalized seizures in adults and children 12 years of age and older, and to treat children with partial seizures between 3 and 12 years of age. It is generally given along with other seizure medicines.

- Gabapentin has also been approved to treat pain with postherpetic neuralgia.
- This medicine is excreted by the kidneys and the dose or way it is taken may be different in people with kidney problems.
- Gabapentin is available in generic form and may look different, depending on the company that makes the generic.
- The dose of gabapentin and how it is taken may vary depending on why it is being given, the form of medicine, and whether it is taken alone or with other medicines. It is important to follow the exact directions given to you by your doctor.
- Do not take gabapentin within 2 hours of taking an antacid.
- Always check the appearance of the capsules with the pharmacist when the prescription is filled to be certain you are given the right medication.

Important questions to ask your doctor:

- Why am I being given this medicine? _____
- What amount should I be taking? _____

What does the drug look like and how should I take it?

Neurontin Capsules

Available in 3 strengths

100 mg (white)
 Marked with "PD" on one half and "Neurontin 100 mg" on the other



300 mg (yellow)
 Marked with "PD" on one half and "Neurontin 300 mg" on the other



400 mg (orange)
 Marked with "PD" on one half and "Neurontin 400 mg" on the other



To take capsules:

- Swallow capsules whole with a full glass of water.
- Usually taken 3 times a day.

Neurontin Tablets

Available in 2 strengths

600 mg (white, scored)

Marked with “NT” and “16” on one side



600mg

800 mg (white, scored)

Marked with “NT” and “26” on one side



800mg

To take tablets:

- To swallow tablets:
 - Take whole with a glass of water.
 - If scored tablet is split in half, make sure to take the remaining part at the next dose.
- If people have difficulty swallowing tablets whole:
 - Crush tablets and mix the drug with a small amount of soft food.
 - Be sure to swallow all of the mixture.
 - Do not save any of the mixture for later use.
- Usually taken 3 times a day.

Neurontin Solution

5 milliliters (ml) or 1 teaspoon is equal to 250 milligrams (mg)

Neurontin suspension is clear to slightly yellow in color with a strawberry-anise flavor.

To take in liquid form:

- Shake the bottle well before using it.
- Use only a special measuring spoon or device to measure the correct dose.
- Make sure to swallow the whole dose.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Is it best to take this medicine with food? This medicine can be taken with food or on an empty stomach. Sometimes taking it with food will lessen stomach upset. Try to take it the same way each day, since taking this with food may change the time it takes to be absorbed.

What should I do if I miss a dose? If you miss or forget a dose take it as soon as possible. However, if you have missed a dose and it is within a few hours before your next dose, take only the next scheduled dose. Do not double up or take extra medicine, unless instructed to do so by your doctor.

How can I remember to take my medicine?

- Take medicine at the same time each day.
- Take medicine at the same times as some other routine, such as brushing teeth, after meals, or bedtime.
- Use a pillbox so you can check if you have taken a dose.
- Use an alarm to remind you of times to take a dose.
- Keep a written schedule or chart of when to take the medicine.
- Talk to your doctor or health care provider about problems remembering to take the medicine.

How long will it take for the medicine to work? It may take a number of weeks to find the right dose, and then more time may be needed to know how well the medicine works to control your seizures. How long this takes will be different for each person. It may depend on how often you have seizures, what other medicine you may be taking, and how your body responds to the drug.

Should I write down how the medicine is affecting me? It is important to write down how you feel while you are on the medicine. Also keep track of changes in how much medicine is prescribed, side effects, and changes in seizures. Take the information to all follow-up visits with your health care providers.

How should I store my medicine? Store the medicine at room temperature (25° C or 77° F), away from heat, moisture and direct light. Keep it out of the reach of children. Don't keep in the bathroom, glove box of a car, or where children can easily find them, such as in purses or low cabinets or counter top for example. Keep the liquid in its original container in the refrigerator.

Will this medicine affect other medicines that I am taking? Make sure to tell all your health care providers the names of all medicines, herbal or dietary supplements, vitamins and over-the-counter medicines you may be taking. Some of these medicines may interfere with how gabapentin works and change the amount in your system. Gabapentin may also affect how other medicines work.

Some medicines that may interact with gabapentin include: some pain medicines and antacids. Antacids may affect how gabapentin is absorbed from the stomach, so don't take these within two hours of taking gabapentin.

What side effects may occur? Side effects may occur with any medicine. Some side effects will go away on their own or when the dose of medicine is changed. Others may be more serious and mean that your body is not tolerating the drug. Tell your doctor about all side effects that occur, but do not stop taking the medicine without advice from your doctor. Some side effects include the following:

Common: Tired, sleepy, dizziness, weight gain, swelling of the ankles.

Less Common: Headache, unsteady walking, double vision, tremor, stomach upset, behavior problems in children.

Potentially serious:

- **Rash:** Not all rashes are caused by the medicine, but all rashes should be reported to your doctor and checked out.

On July 10, 2008, an advisory panel was convened by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to review data that the FDA had previously collected from drug studies showing an association between many of the antiepileptic drugs (AEDs) and suicidal ideation and behavior, which together are called suicidality. According to the FDA's Alert, among the patients with epilepsy in these drug studies, 1 out of 1000 people taking the placebo (inactive substance) showed suicidality compared to approximately 3.5 out of 1000 people who took an AED. The FDA advisory panel voted to accept the FDA's data at its meeting on July 10.

The FDA has provided the following information for patients, family members, and caregivers at www.fda.gov/cder/drug/InfoSheets/HCP/antiepilepticsHCP.htm):

- Taking antiepileptic medicines may increase the risk of having suicidal thoughts or actions;
- Do not make any changes to the medication regimen without first talking with the responsible healthcare professional;
- Pay close attention to any day-to-day changes in mood, behavior and actions. These changes can happen very quickly so it is important to be mindful of any sudden differences.
- Be aware of common warning signs that might be a signal for risk of suicide. Some of these are:
 - Talking or thinking about wanting to hurt yourself or end your life
 - Withdrawing from friends and family
 - Becoming depressed or having your depression get worse
 - Becoming preoccupied with death and dying
 - Giving away prized possessions

We again urge patients and families to contact their doctor before stopping an epilepsy medication because this may possibly lead to seizures and worsening of mood.

How can I manage my side effects? Side effects such as dizziness, drowsiness or fatigue may be seen within the first few days of starting the drug, or when the dose of medicine has been increased. These side effects usually go away on their own. To help lessen these side effects:

- Take the first dose in the evening or before bedtime.
- Take the higher dose in the evening or before bedtime when the dose is changed.
- Talk to your doctor about increasing the dose more slowly.

When should I call my doctor?

- Call a doctor right away if any side effects become severe or cause problems in your ability to function.
- Do not stop the medicine without talking to a doctor first.

Can this seizure medicine affect bone health? Some seizure medicines can cause thinning of the bones and lead to bone loss. While gabapentin is not known to cause bone problems, all people taking seizure medicine should take calcium and vitamin D supplements each day. Regular exercise and diet are also very important. People who have thinning of the bones may also need to take prescription medicines to treat this. Talk to your doctor about tests to check the health of your bones and what to do next.

Can I drink alcohol while on this medicine? People taking this medicine should not drink alcohol, because gabapentin can increase the effects of alcohol.

May I drive while taking gabapentin? Use caution when driving, operating machinery, or performing other hazardous activities. Gabapentin may cause dizziness, drowsiness, or other symptoms that may affect your safety, especially in the first couple of weeks. If you have these problems or are having seizures, avoid these activities and talk to your doctor.

Just for Women:

Is this medicine safe to take during pregnancy? Gabapentin has an FDA pregnancy category of “C” meaning that the benefits of taking the medicine may outweigh the risks of harming the baby. If you find or suspect that you are pregnant, continue use of this medicine and contact your doctor right away. Talk to your doctor about the potential benefits and risks before making any decisions about use of this medicine. Seizures can be harmful to the mother and the developing baby but these can be lessened with proper care.

Does this medicine affect birth control pills? This medicine is not known to affect hormonal contraceptives or birth control.

Will the medicine affect my menstrual cycle? This medicine is not known to affect the menstrual cycle. If your cycle becomes irregular, call your doctor.

Can I breast feed while taking this medicine? In general, women taking gabapentin can breastfeed while using this medicine. However, the drug does pass through breast milk in small amounts. According to the American Academy of Neurology, the benefits for the infant and mother are believed to outweigh the risks for adverse effects. Talk to your doctor regarding this option.

Are there any specific vitamins I should be taking? All women who could possibly get pregnant should be taking at least 0.4 milligrams (mg) of folic acid or folate each day. Women taking some seizure medicines may need to take a higher dose of folic acid, up to 4 mg each day. Speak to your health care provider for specific instructions. Folic acid is also found in leafy dark green vegetables, fruits and juices, and lentils.

More Questions?

For more detailed information about Gabapentin, please visit www.epilepsy.com and click on Treatment >> Seizure Medicines (www.epilepsy.com/epilepsy/seizure_medicines.html)

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