Gabapentin in pain management

What is a gabapentin?

Gabapentin is used to treat long-lasting pain that has been caused by dysfunction or damage to nerves. This is called neuropathic pain.

A variety of different conditions can cause neuropathic pain, which causes sensations such as, burning, throbbing, shooting, stabbing, sharp pain, cramping, aching or pins and needles.

Gabapentin is a drug that can also treat epilepsy, but is very often used for treating nerve pain. Your doctor has prescribed it to help in the management of your neuropathic pain. It is often used in combination with other pain medications to help improve your pain.

How should I take gabapentin?

To minimise side effects gabapentin is started at a low dose and increased gradually, as instructed by your pain doctor, nurse or GP.

You may continue taking your other regular pain medications, unless advised to stop taking these by your pain doctor/nurse or GP.

Your doctor or nurse will enter the dose you need to take in the table below

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Before you start taking gabapentin

Please inform your doctor if you are planning pregnancy or are pregnant, breast feeding, have kidney problems or are allergic to any medications.

When will it work?

Some people feel benefit straight away in others it may take one to two weeks. Sometimes you may not notice the benefit until you have reached the higher doses. Everyone is different and will require different amounts of the drug.
Risks and side effects

All drugs have side effects but they do not always happen in all patients. Common side effects are tiredness, drowsiness, dizziness, constipation and weakness which usually reduce or disappear after taking the drugs for a few days. If you feel affected by this we advise that you should avoid driving or operating machinery until the effects have worn off. Sometimes gabapentin can cause weight gain, so you may have to watch your appetite and diet. The full set of side effects can be found in the leaflet inside the medication box. Alcohol may make side-effects worse.

Avoid taking antacids (ranitidine, omeprazole or lansoprazole etc) two hours before or after gabapentin as they decrease the absorption of the drug.

What if I forget a dose?

Take the dose as soon as you remember. If you have missed the dose by four hours then skip the dose you missed and take your next dose as you would normally. Do not double up to make up for your missed dose.

How to stop taking gabapentin.

This is done gradually over at least 10-14 days. If done suddenly you could experience adverse effects like nausea, pain, sweating, anxiety and insomnia.

Do you have any further questions?

Please contact the pain nurses on 0207 794 0500 x 31912 and leave a message on the answerphone. Someone will aim to call you back in 24 to 48 hours.

If you would like this information in an alternative format, please ask a member of staff.