

# Gabapentin for Restless Legs Syndrome

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide some information about gabapentin, which has been prescribed to treat your Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS).

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What is gabapentin?

Gabapentin belongs to a group of medicines known as anti-epileptic medicines. It can be used for a variety of conditions such as epilepsy, neuropathic pain and restless legs. The way in which gabapentin works in RLS is not fully understood but it is thought to affect activity in the nerve cell. This helps to improve the severity of symptoms.

## Taking an unlicensed medicine

The use of gabapentin for RLS is unlicensed which means that although the manufacturer of the medicine has not specified it can be used in this way, there is evidence that it works to treat this particular condition. The leaflet, **Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients**, has more information about unlicensed medicines. If you would like a copy, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Alternatively you can call the pharmacy medicines helpline – contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

## How do I take the medicine?

For the treatment of RLS, gabapentin should be taken orally (by mouth) once daily at night. It should be swallowed whole with a glass of water, and can be taken with or without food. Keep taking the medicine until your doctor tells you otherwise. Stopping suddenly can cause problems and your doctor will want you to reduce your dose gradually if you need to stop treatment.

## What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?

If you forget to take the dose before you fall asleep, do not worry. Take the next dose when it is due. **Do not take an extra dose the following evening to make up for a missed dose.**

## Are there any side effects?

The following are examples of some of the side effects reported by patients taking gabapentin. **For further information on side effects, please see the manufacturer's leaflet that comes with the medicine.**

Side effect (What is it?)	What should I do if it happens?
Increased appetite & weight gain	Try to eat a balanced diet and increase exercise.
Mood disturbances (euphoria & depression)	If this becomes troublesome, speak with your doctor.
Dizziness	Take dose immediately before bedtime, if symptoms persist contact GP.
Sleepiness/drowsiness, confusion	Take dose immediately before bedtime, if symptoms persist contact GP.
Co-ordination, balance or speech affected	Seek medical advice immediately.

**If any of the side effects persist or become a problem, please contact your GP/consultant or pharmacist for advice**

## Is there anything else I need to know?

There is a risk that you may become dependent on gabapentin whilst taking it. Withdrawal symptoms have been observed when treatment is abruptly stopped (nervousness, mood disturbances, flu-like symptoms). If you have been taking gabapentin for some time and want to stop it, your doctor will recommend that you reduce your dose slowly in order to avoid the risk of these effects.

## Can I take gabapentin with other medicines?

Gabapentin may interact with some medicines. It is therefore important to let us know about any medicines that you are currently taking so that we can check gabapentin is suitable for you. If you are buying any medicines over-the-counter from a pharmacy always mention that you have been prescribed gabapentin. It is safe to take ibuprofen or paracetamol with this medicine. Advice should be sought when purchasing herbal or homeopathic remedies.

Gabapentin should be kept out of reach of children. The expiry date is printed on the container. Do not use the medicine after this date. The remainder should be returned to your local pharmacy to be discarded.

## How will my treatment be reviewed?

Your treatment will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and the dose adjusted accordingly in response to your symptoms.

## How do I get a repeat prescription?

Your GP will give you a repeat prescription for gabapentin, which you can take to your local community pharmacy for supply. Please ensure you request your repeat prescription in a timely manner to prevent your supply running out or risk missing any doses of your medication.

## Useful sources of information

RLS-UK Supporting people with Restless Legs Syndrome  
<http://www.rls-uk.org/>

You might find this charity's website - [www.rls-uk.org](http://www.rls-uk.org) - useful for connecting with patients who suffer from the same condition as you but any new information found should not alter your current treatment regimen and you should discuss any new advice with the doctor caring for your condition.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your sleep disorder please contact the Sleep Disorder Centre on **020 7188 3430** (9am – 5pm).

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

### Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

### NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

**t:** 0800 731 0319 **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

**Leaflet number: 4421/VER1**

Date published: June 2017

Review date: June 2020

© 2017 Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust