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 treating RLS is unlicensed, which means that the manufacturer of the medicine has not specified it can be used in this way. However 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 a day 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, don’t 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.
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.

If you are a driver, please be aware that gabapentin may affect your reactions and ability to drive. It is an offence to drive while your reactions are impaired. Even if your driving ability is not impaired, if you drive, you are advised to carry some evidence with you which shows that the medicine has been prescribed for you – a repeat prescription form or the patient information leaflet from the packet is generally considered suitable.

Can I take gabapentin with other medicines?
Gabapentin may interact with some medicines. It is 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. Seek advice from a pharmacist when buying herbal or homeopathic remedies.
Gabapentin should be kept out of reach of children. If anyone other than you takes this medicine, you, they, or their parent/carer should contact NHS 111 for advice. If they are unwell, they should call for an ambulance.

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.

**Pregnancy and breastfeeding:**
We do not recommend the use of this medicine if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. You should let your consultant know if you are planning a pregnancy so that a management plan can be agreed. If you discover that you are pregnant, please contact your consultant for advice as soon as possible.

**Sleep hygiene:** Taking gabapentin is not a replacement for a good sleep routine. It is still important to aim to get around seven to eight hours of sleep at night if possible. It is advisable to go to bed when tired, and get up at about the same time each day.

**How will my treatment be reviewed?**
Your treatment will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and the dose adjusted 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 pharmacy for supply. Please make sure you request your repeat prescription early enough to prevent your supply running out or risking missing any doses of your medication.

**Useful sources of information**
RLS-UK Supporting people with restless legs syndrome, [w: www.rls-uk.org/](http://www.rls-uk.org/)
You might find this charity’s website useful for connecting with patients who suffer from the same condition as you, but any new information found should not alter your current treatment programme 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, **t:** 020 7188 3430, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

**Out of hours:**
Please leave a message and a member of staff will call you back in working hours; alternatively please contact your GP or NHS 111.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

**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.
\textit{t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) \quad e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk}
\textit{t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) \quad e: 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.
\textit{t: 020 7188 8815 \quad e: 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.
\textit{t: 111}

NHS website
Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.
\textit{w: 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:
\textit{t: 0800 731 0319 \quad e: members@gstt.nhs.uk}
\textit{w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership}