

Appendix 4a: Patient information leaflet – Reducing your gabapentin or pregabalin for pain

This leaflet explains why reducing your dose of gabapentin or pregabalin may be right for you, and what might happen if your dose is reduced. Your medicine is sometimes used for long-lasting (chronic) pain. However, it may not work for some people and may cause unwanted effects (side effects).

Why reduce my dose?

Your healthcare worker may recommend reducing your dose of gabapentin or pregabalin if:

- you are experiencing side effects
- your pain has not improved despite treatment
- you wish to take fewer medicines
- the medicine is no longer helping your day-to-day activities
- this medicine is unlikely to help with your type of pain
- continuing treatment may put you at risk of harm.

How will my dose be reduced?

Your dose will be reduced slowly, and the speed of reduction will depend on:

- how much you are currently taking
- how long you have been taking it
- how your body responds to each change.

Follow the plan that you have agreed with your healthcare worker.

Do not stop taking this medicine suddenly unless you have been advised to do so.

How might I feel when reducing my dose?

Some people experience symptoms when their dose of gabapentin or pregabalin is reduced. Symptoms might include:

- anxiety, disturbed sleep, dizziness, or headaches
- feeling sick (nausea), diarrhoea, or sweating
- generalised aches and pains.

These are known as ‘withdrawal symptoms’ and are usually short-lived and get better over time. If you find these symptoms are difficult to manage, ask your healthcare worker for advice and support.

What if my pain increases?

Some people notice that their pain gets worse for a short time when their dose is reduced. You should ask your healthcare worker for advice before making any changes.

Your healthcare worker may:

- slow the reduction plan
- keep the dose the same for longer
- suggest other ways to manage your pain.

Do not increase your dose yourself. Taking a higher dose than prescribed can be dangerous and increases the risk of serious side effects or overdose.

Who will support me while I am reducing my dose?

Your healthcare worker will guide you through reducing your dose and make sure all changes are made safely. To help you manage during your dose reduction:

- You and your healthcare worker will agree a clear plan before starting any changes to your dose.
- Your local (community) pharmacist can advise and support you.
- The pace of reduction can be slowed, if needed.
- If you have any concerns, or if your symptoms are difficult to manage, tell your healthcare worker.
- What if I feel worried?

It is common to feel anxious when asked to change a medicine that you have taken for a long time. Living with long-lasting pain is difficult. The aim of dose reduction is to keep you safe and to make sure that any medicine you take is doing you more good than harm.

You can help by:

- keeping a simple diary of pain, sleep and symptoms
- attending review appointments
- raising concerns early
- using other ways of managing pain such as staying active, taking gentle exercise and having a healthy lifestyle. Your healthcare worker can suggest some options that might be suitable for you.

If you have any concerns, contact your healthcare worker.

Visit the AWTTC website for useful links and resources.

