

# GABAPENTIN

Information That Patients Need to Know About Their Medication

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## What is gabapentin?

Gabapentin is an anticonvulsant medication that has been prescribed by your doctor to relieve or prevent your nerve pain. Gabapentin is available as an oral tablet, capsule, solution or suspension, and a long-acting tablet (see table below). Another name you may see on the prescription label is Neurontin, Gralise, or Horizant.

## What is it used for?

Gabapentin is used to treat nerve pain due to postherpetic neuralgia (pain that occurs after shingles) in adults, and as adjunctive therapy in the treatment of partial onset seizures in adults and children 3 years of age and older. It is also used for the treatment of diabetic neuropathy, fibromyalgia, Guillain-Barre syndrome, and Restless Legs Syndrome. Gabapentin is only available with a prescription.

## How do I take this medication?

Ask your pharmacist and follow the instructions shown on the prescription bottle. Initially, you will be started at a low dose in order to minimize side effects and the dose will be increased as tolerated. Gabapentin may be taken up to 3 times daily (the brand name products Horizant and Gralise are taken once daily). The maximum recommended dose is

between 1,800 and 3,600 mg/day.

Neurontin and generic brands of gabapentin can be taken with or without food, but should always be taken with a full glass of water. The brand names Horizant and Gralise of gabapentin should be taken with the evening meal. If you take an aluminum- or magnesium-containing antacid, such as Maalox or Mylanta, wait at least 2 hours before taking gabapentin.

If you are taking the oral solution or suspension, or giving a dose to a child, use a calibrated measuring spoon, oral syringe, or medicine cup instead of a household teaspoon to measure the dose. Scored tablets (Neurontin, generics) may be broken in half. The brands Horizant and Gralise should be swallowed whole; do not split, crush, or chew the tablets.

## Is this drug safe?

If you have a history of severe kidney disease, liver disease, depression, or are pregnant or breastfeeding, gabapentin may not be the right drug for you. Your doctor will give you a lower dose of gabapentin if you have kidney disease. Common side effects seen with gabapentin include dizziness, fatigue, sleepiness, and difficulty keeping your balance.

You should avoid alcohol while taking gabapentin, as it may increase these side effects. Because gabapentin can cause

**Table. Gabapentin**

Dosage Formulation (Brand name)	Strength(s)
Tablet (Neurontin, generic)	600, 800 mg
Tablet (Gralise)	300, 600 mg
Tablet, extended-release (Horizant)	300, 600 mg
Capsule (Neurontin, generic)	100, 300, 400 mg
Oral Solution (Neurontin, generic)	250 mg/5 mL

dizziness and sleepiness, do not drive a car or operate complex machinery until you understand how gabapentin affects you. Your doctor will start gabapentin at a low dose and will increase the dose gradually to minimize these side effects. Occasionally patients will experience swelling in their ankles (edema).

### How do I know if it is working?

If you are taking gabapentin for nerve pain, then you should experience some pain relief. However, it may take several weeks of regular use to notice a significant improvement. If you do not feel better after several weeks, you may want to call your pharmacist or prescriber to see if you need a larger dose or if a different medication may be right for you.

### How do I know if something is wrong?

You should contact your prescriber if you have any signs or symptoms of an allergic reaction. This could include

a rash, hives, swelling, muscle pain, and/or yellowing of the skin/eyes. You should also contact your prescriber for new or worsening depression, thoughts of hurting yourself, or unusual changes in mood or behavior. Contact your prescriber if the side effects discussed above do not lessen, or if they worsen.

### How do I store my medication?

Gabapentin tablets and capsules should be stored in a cool, dry place, such as your nightstand. The oral solution should be stored in the refrigerator. Do not store gabapentin or any other medications in a humid place, such as the kitchen or bathroom. All medications should be stored in a safe location in your house.

### What do I do if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose, you should take a dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose; do not double the dose. Do not stop taking gabapentin without first talking to your prescriber.

### References

1. DRUGDEX® System (electronic version). Truven Health Analytics, Greenwood Village, Colorado, USA. Available at: <http://www.micromedexsolutions.com.proxy-hs.researchport.umd.edu> (cited: 4/20/2015).
2. Lexi-Drugs. Lexicomp. Wolters Kluwer Health, Inc. Hudson, OH. Available at: <http://online.lexi.com> (cited: 4/20/2015).
3. Neurontin® [package insert]. New York, NY: Pfizer Inc; 2014.



## Prescriber Quick Fact Card

#### Name:

Gabapentin (Neurontin, generics, Horizant, Gralise)

**Class:** Anticonvulsant

#### Dosage Forms:

- Tablet (300 mg, 400 mg, 600 mg, 800 mg)
- Capsule (100 mg, 300 mg, 400 mg)
- Oral Solution (250 mg/5 mL)
- Oral Suspension (25 mg/mL)

**Indications:** Postherpetic neuralgia; partial onset seizures (adjunctive therapy), Restless Legs Syndrome, others

#### Directions for Use:

Up to three times daily. **MAX: 1,800-3,600 mg/day for adults**

#### Cautions:

Do not use with alcohol, caution in renal impairment and depression

#### Side Effects:

Somnolence, dizziness, ataxia, edema, diplopia, edema

#### Monitoring:

Pain score, kidney function, mood