

Medicines for Children: information for parents and carers

Gabapentin for preventing seizures



This leaflet is about the use of gabapentin to prevent epileptic seizures. (Seizures may also be called convulsions or fits.)

This leaflet has been written specifically for parents and carers about the use of this medicine in children. The information may differ from that provided by the manufacturer. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Do not stop giving gabapentin suddenly, as your child may have more seizures.

Name of drug

Gabapentin

Brand name: Neurontin®

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?


It is important that your child takes gabapentin regularly so that they have fewer seizures.

What is gabapentin available as?

- Tablets: 600 mg (white, or white with black markings), 800 mg (white, or white with orange markings)
- Capsules: 100 mg, 300 mg, 400 mg; these contain small amounts of lactose


When should I give gabapentin?

- Gabapentin is usually given three times a day. This should be first thing in the morning, early afternoon and at bedtime. Ideally, these times are at least 4 hours apart.
- You may start by giving gabapentin once a day for a few days, then twice a day for a few days, then three times a day. This will help your child to get used to the medicine. Your doctor will explain what to do.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions.**

How much should I give?

- Your doctor will work out the amount of gabapentin (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.
- When you first start giving gabapentin to your child, you may start with a small amount and then increase the dose bit by bit over a few days or weeks. This helps your child to get used to the medicine. Your doctor will explain what to do.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions.**

How should I give it?



Tablets

- These should be swallowed with a glass of water, juice or similar. Your child should not chew the tablets.
- You can crush the tablet and mix it with a small amount of soft food (e.g. yogurt, honey or jam) or a drink (water or juice). Make sure your child swallows it all straight away, without chewing.



Capsules

- These should be swallowed with a glass of water, juice or similar. Your child should not chew the capsules.
- You can open the capsule and mix the contents with a teaspoon of soft food (e.g. yogurt, honey or jam) or a small amount (10 mL, which is about 2 teaspoons) of fruit squash. Make sure your child swallows it straight away, without chewing. The capsule contents have a bitter taste, so you will need to use something strong tasting to mask it, such as undiluted fruit squash.

When will the medicine start working?

It will take a few weeks for gabapentin to work properly, so your child may still have seizures during this time. This is because the amount of medicine has to be increased slowly. Continue to give the medicine as you have been told to by your doctor.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after taking a dose of gabapentin, give the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after taking a dose of gabapentin, you **do not** need to give them another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.

What if I forget to give it?

- If you miss a dose, wait until the next normal dose. Do not give the missed dose.

 Never give a 'double' dose of gabapentin.

What if I give too much?

- If you think you may have given your child too much gabapentin, contact your doctor or NHS Direct (0845 4647) or take your child to hospital.
- Take the medicine container or pack with you, even if it is empty. This will be useful to the doctor. Have the packet with you if you telephone for advice.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children better, but sometimes they cause effects that we don't want (side-effects).

Your child may get these side-effects when they first start taking gabapentin. They will usually settle down within a week or so as their body gets used to the medicine. Continue to give gabapentin to your child as your doctor has told you to

during this time. If any of these side-effects continue for longer than a week or so, or if you are worried, contact your doctor.

- Your child may be drowsy (sleepy), dizzy or unsteady.
- Your child may feel less hungry (lose their appetite), and feel sick (nausea) or be sick (vomit).
- Your child may get diarrhoea, constipation, wind, indigestion or a dry mouth. Your doctor may be able to prescribe other medicines to help with these symptoms if they are a problem.
- Occasionally children may seem particularly emotional, anxious or overactive or may have problems with their memory.
- Your child may be hungrier than usual – this effect can last for many months. Encourage your child to eat food that is low in fat and sugar, otherwise they may put on a lot of weight.

Can other common medicines be given at the same time as gabapentin?

- You can give your child medicines that contain ibuprofen or paracetamol, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Do not give gabapentin at the same time as indigestion remedies. Wait at least 2 hours between these two types of medicine.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

Epilepsy and pregnancy

- Pregnancy presents a risk to both the mother with epilepsy and her unborn baby. If your daughter has sex, it is essential that she uses adequate contraception to prevent an unplanned pregnancy.
- If your daughter is worried that she may be pregnant, it is important that she sees your family doctor as early as possible. Your daughter should keep taking her medication until she sees her doctor.

Gabapentin and pregnancy

- Doctors don't yet know whether gabapentin can harm an unborn baby.
- The oral contraceptive pill can be used safely by women or girls who are taking gabapentin.

General advice about medicines for seizures

- ⚠ **Do not** suddenly stop giving any of these medicines to your child, as they may have a seizure. If you are worried, talk to your doctor but carry on giving the medicine to your child as usual.
- ⚠ If your child seems to have more seizures than usual, contact your doctor or epilepsy nurse.
 - If your doctor decides to stop a particular medicine, they will discuss this with you. You will usually reduce the dose bit by bit.
- ⚠ **Do not** change the dose of any drug without talking to your doctor first.
 - It is best that your child always has the same brand of each medicine, as there may be differences between brands. Keep a record of which medicines your child has.
- ⚠ Try to give medicines at about the same times every day, to help you remember.
 - Only give the medicine(s) to *your* child. Never give them to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as this could do harm.
- ⚠ If you think someone else may have taken a medicine by accident, contact your doctor straight away for advice.
 - Make sure that you always have enough medicine. Order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
 - Make sure that the medicines you have at home have not reached the 'best before' or 'use by' date on the packaging. Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep the medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your child's hospital doctor, epilepsy nurse or pharmacist will be able to give you more information about gabapentin and other medicines used to treat epilepsy.

You can also get useful information from these organisations.

Epilepsy Action

www.epilepsy.org.uk
helpline 0808 800 5050

NHS Direct

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
0845 4647

National Society for Epilepsy

www.epilepsynse.org.uk
helpline 01494 601 400

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health



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We have written this leaflet to help you understand more about the medicine you are giving to your child. We take great care to make sure that the information is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is therefore important that you follow the advice of your doctor or pharmacist, as they understand your child's illness. If you are not sure about something, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Note that this leaflet applies to the use of medicines in the UK; it may not apply in other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), The Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading the leaflet.