



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 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, 800 mg
- **Capsules:** 100 mg, 300 mg, 400 mg; these contain small amounts of lactose
- **Liquid medicine:** 50 mg in 1 mL; these may contain acesulfame K and saccharin sodium (artificial sweeteners), and propylene glycol. If you have any concerns or questions, speak with your child's doctor or pharmacist.

When should I give gabapentin?

Gabapentin may be given twice a day, but more often is given **three times** a day. If it is 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 will give them 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 about how much to give.**

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.



Liquid medicine: Measure out the right amount using an oral syringe or a medicine spoon. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.

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

What if I forget?

- 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 your local NHS services (111 in England and Scotland; 0845 4647 in Wales) or take your child to hospital.

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 the following side-effects when they first start taking gabapentin. They will usually settle down within a week or so as your child 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 more hungry than usual (increased appetite) – this effect can last for many months. Encourage them to eat fruit and vegetables and low-calorie foods, rather than foods that contain a lot of calories (avoid crisps, cakes, biscuits and sweets), and to have plenty of exercise. 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.
- If your child needs to take any medicines for indigestion (antacids), do not give these with gabapentin. Give the two medicines at different times of the day.
- 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 thinks 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 do not know yet 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 epilepsy

-  **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 your 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. If you have any concerns or questions, speak with your child's doctor or pharmacist.
- Try to give medicines at about the same times every day, to help you remember.
- Only give this medicine to *your* child. Never give it 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 the medicine by accident, contact your doctor straight away.

- 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:

England

NHS 111: 111 - www.nhs.uk

Scotland

NHS 24: 111 - www.nhs24.com

Wales/Galw Lechyd Cymru

NHS Direct: 0845 4647
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland

NI Direct: www.nidirect.gov.uk

Young Epilepsy

Helpline: 01342 831 342
www.youngepilepsy.org.uk

Epilepsy Society

Helpline: 01494 601 400
www.epilepsysociety.org.uk

Epilepsy Action

Helpline: 0808 800 5050
www.epilepsy.org.uk

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk