

# Medication Information Sheet



## **Gabapentin**

brands: Neurontin®

*Medications are only ONE part of a successful treatment plan. They are appropriate when they provide benefit, improve function and have either no or mild, manageable side effects. Importantly, medications (even if natural) are chemical substances not expected in the body, and as such have side effects. Some of the side effects might be unknown. The use of medications/drugs for any purpose requires patient consent. This practice does NOT require a patient to use any medication.*

### **Information & potential benefits**

Gabapentin is a unique medication that has changed some concepts in pain management. Although it originally was a seizure-preventing medication, most of its use is for pain management. Neurontin is FDA approved for neuropathic pain (related to shingles) and for seizures. The medication works on a specific subunit of nerve calcium channels; this helps reduce pain and blocks seizures.

### **Potential risks and side effects**

Common side effects of gabapentin include sleepiness and dizziness. Apparently, some people like that feeling and therefore there is some abuse potential, although the medication is not a narcotic. Although the medication does not appear to have an effect on the liver, the medication is removed from the body by the kidneys. The dose must be changed if there are kidney problems. The medication may change some blood count values; currently there is no recommendation for routine lab monitoring. Some patients can gain weight or have swelling in the ankles. There is potential for hallucinations and sexual side effects. All medications in this category may worsen depression, possibly resulting in suicide. All patients should be aware of the risk and should let the prescribing practitioner know immediately of any worsening of depression. Gabapentin may work as a pain medication and a seizure-blocker.

### **Dosing information**

The medication does not last long and is used three times daily; some patients use the medication once or twice daily but it probably does not work as well unless it is used three times daily on a consistent basis. *The usual dose in pain centers ranges between 1200-3600mg per day if not more, which is more than the doses tested by the FDA.*

### **Important information**

Disclaimer: This is for informational purposes only. This does not replace the instructions you received from your provider, does not constitute initiation of medical treatment or establishment of a patient-physician relationship, does not constitute any form of recommendation, prescription or medical advice, and does not imply that the medication is appropriate or FDA approved for any condition. This information is not a complete listing of instructions, doses, uses or side effects. If this was prescribed to you, you must review this information with your pharmacist and prescriber before starting the medication. Any medication may interfere with the ability to drive, concentrate or operate machinery; patients must be responsible for their own behavior and should not engage in any dangerous activity if there is any question of impairment. All medications have side effects and drug interactions, some serious, some fatal. Let all of your practitioners and pharmacists know about every substance used. Alcohol, herbals or illegal drugs are not considered safe with these medications. Assume no medication is safe during pregnancy or while breast feeding. The medication may interfere with birth control. Almost any medication can cause sleepiness, insomnia, dizziness, confusion, hallucinations, anxiety, panic, constipation or diarrhea, headache, chest pain and nausea or vomiting, among others. Most medications should NOT be stopped suddenly because of the risk of withdrawal.