

## Gabapentinoid Reduction – Patient Information Leaflet

### What are gabapentinoids?

Gabapentinoids are drugs such as gabapentin or pregabalin, which may be prescribed to help manage neuropathic (nerve) pain. Neuropathic pain is a type of pain that occurs when the nerves become very sensitive and send too many pain signals. Common symptoms of neuropathic pain include: pins and needles, burning or shooting pain and/or feeling pain when being touched. These symptoms may be present all of the time or come and go.

### Why should I reduce the amount of gabapentinoid medication that I take?

You should reduce the amount of gabapentinoid medication that you take if advised to do so by your GP. Although gabapentinoids may be beneficial for pain relief, they do have side effects and risks. You can find out about these by reading the leaflet in your medicine pack.

To reduce side effects and the risks, your GP may recommend a trial reduction of gabapentinoid medication. This will help you to check:

- Whether you are still experiencing neuropathic pain
- Whether the gabapentinoid medication is still helping your pain
- Whether you are experiencing any side effects

### How should I reduce my gabapentinoid medication?

Your GP will tell you what to do. Dose reduction should be gradual, for example stepping down every 10 days but no faster than once a week, unless advised and supervised by a health care professional.

**Please see table overleaf for your individual gabapentinoid reduction plan.**

### How will any withdrawal symptoms be managed?

Withdrawal symptoms can be unpleasant so reducing the dose slowly is important to minimise this. Examples of symptoms that you may experience are: anxiety, difficulty with sleeping, feeling sick, pain or sweating.

Withdrawal symptoms may occur within a day and last up to seven days. If you experience withdrawal effects then do not reduce further. Keep on the dose that you have reduced to and wait for the withdrawal effects to stop before reducing further. Reducing at a slower rate or by smaller amounts may be helpful to minimise withdrawal effects. If symptoms continue despite following the above advice, speak to your GP, pharmacist or pain specialist.

#### **Warning:**

**Withdrawal symptoms sometimes cause people to seek gabapentinoids from non-medical sources, which can be dangerous. There is also a risk of overdose or death if a higher dose of gabapentin or pregabalin is taken following dose reduction as tolerance is reduced.**

### What should I do if pain increases?

If you experience an increase in pain then do not reduce your gabapentinoid medication further. Keep on the dose that you have reduced to and increase the frequency of non-drug related pain management strategies being undertaken, e.g. stretching, pacing of activities, relaxing or distraction.

If the increased pain does not settle then discuss with your GP whether to increase your dose slowly again to the lowest dose that controls your pain. Your GP may attempt another trial reduction in a few months depending on how you feel.

**Please turn over**

### What is my individual plan?

This is shown in the table below.

<b>Current gabapentinoid:</b>				
<b>Morning dose:</b>				
<b>Midday dose: (if applicable)</b>				
<b>Evening dose:</b>				
Your gabapentinoid reduction plan				
	Date	Morning dose	Midday dose (if appropriate)	Evening dose
Changes				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

#### Key points

- Do not reduce faster than once a week unless suggested by your GP or Pain Specialist Team
- If you would like to slow down or speed up the tapering process, discuss this with your GP
- **Do not go back to a higher dose of gabapentin or pregabalin after your dose has been reduced unless your GP tells you to. Going back to a higher dose can be very dangerous.**

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