



Gabapentin for Menopausal Symptoms

Menopause is a normal event, but some women have troublesome symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats. Currently the most effective treatment is menopausal hormone therapy (MHT). Gabapentin is a non-hormonal treatment that may be prescribed for women who need to or want to avoid MHT.

Why have you been prescribed gabapentin?

Gabapentin is usually used to control epilepsy or chronic nerve pain. It also reduces menopausal hot flushes. Gabapentin in higher doses has been shown to be as effective as oestrogen in reducing the severity and frequency of hot flushes.

Before you take gabapentin

Tell your doctor if you are taking other medications or herbal products, in particular:

- ▶ Certain medicines to treat stomach or duodenal ulcers, like cimetidine
- ▶ Antacids – medicines used to treat heartburn or reflux (reduces the effectiveness of gabapentin if taken less than 2 hours apart).
- ▶ Alcohol

How to take gabapentin

1. Swallow whole with a full glass of water. It does not matter if you take gabapentin before or after food.
2. Take gabapentin at the same time each day.
3. The usual starting dose is 300mg at night because it may make you feel sleepy. Increase the dose by 300mg every two to three days (add a morning dose then a midday dose if you have no side effects) until taking 300mg three times a day.

What are the side effects

Most side effects are mild and short lived.

Common side effects include:

- ▶ Dizziness or light headedness
- ▶ Feeling tired or drowsy
- ▶ Dry mouth
- ▶ Visual disturbance (blurred vision, jerky eye movements)
- ▶ Forgetfulness, loss of concentration or confusion

Some people may experience severe mood changes (increased depression, mood disturbance). It is important to let your doctor know as soon as possible if this occurs, as you may need to stop the medicine.

When will you see an improvement in symptoms?

Satisfactory symptom relief is often achieved by two weeks. The dose of Gabapentin required to achieve this varies between women.

If there is no significant reduction in hot flushes by four weeks of treatment, the medication may need to be reviewed.

You should also stop taking it if you develop significant side effects. It is best to do this gradually over several days.

How to stop taking gabapentin?

If you decide or your doctor tells you to stop taking gabapentin, you should reduce the dose gradually over a period of several days, as stopping this medicine suddenly may cause difficulty sleeping, nausea, and pain and your hot flushes may increase or return.

Speak with your doctor about how to do this.

When should you see your doctor?

If this information does not answer your questions or you experience adverse effects from the treatment, please see your GP or contact the Menopause Clinic nurse via phone on (08) 6458 2222 or pager 3358 (Monday – Wednesday).



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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