

# Pregabalin

Information and advice for patients

## *Pain Management*

### **What is Pregabalin?**

Pregabalin is a drug used for the management of neuropathic (nerve) pain. It is thought to work by mimicking a neurotransmitter – a naturally occurring chemical within the body that is involved in transmitting messages between nerve cells. This helps calm nerve activity and can therefore be helpful in the treatment of pain that occurs as a result of damage to or a disturbance in the function of nerves.

Pregabalin is also used to treat epilepsy and generalised anxiety disorder. Pregabalin is not addictive.

### **What are the benefits of Pregabalin?**

The benefits of taking Pregabalin to manage pain are that it can:

- ease long-term (chronic) nerve (neuropathic) pain such as burning, tingling, shooting, pins and needles and 'strange' sensations
- improve your sleep

Unlike some other painkillers, Pregabalin will only work if taken regularly and not on a 'when needed' basis. Pregabalin may not begin to provide pain relief until 2 – 3 weeks after it has been started and may take around 4 - 6 weeks for full benefit, so you need to be patient. However, its effect on improving your quality of sleep is usually noticed much sooner, often after the first dose.

### **What are the risks of Pregabalin?**

There is a risk that you may not find Pregabalin beneficial for your pain. There is also a risk you may experience some of the side effects of Pregabalin.

Everyone responds differently to medication and only the most common side effects are listed below; for a full list of the possible side effects, please read the information leaflet provided by the manufacturer that comes with the medication.

If the side effects are intolerable please stop this medication and seek further advice from your GP. Side effects of Pregabalin include:

- Drowsiness- this is the most common side effect and can also be considered a benefit as the dose you take at night can help improve your sleep
- Constipation
- Dizziness
- Weight gain
- Insomnia (difficulty sleeping)
- Dry mouth - if you experience this try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking pieces of ice or sugar-free sweets.

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### **What are the risks of not taking Pregabalin?**

The only risk of not taking Pregabalin is that you won't experience the benefits it can give.

### **What are the alternative treatments?**

There are a variety of other medications that can be used for nerve pain if Pregabalin is not successful or you do not wish to use it. For information about suitable alternative medications please speak to your doctor.

### **Before taking Pregabalin**

Before taking this medication please let your doctor or nurse know if you have any heart or kidney problems or if you are pregnant or breastfeeding as this medication may not be suitable for you. You should also inform them of any other medications, including herbal remedies, you are taking.

Please make sure you read the manufacturer's information leaflet that comes with your Pregabalin before taking it.

### **How much Pregabalin should I take?**

Most people are prescribed 2 tablets of Pregabalin per day to start with; 1 to be taken in the morning and 1 at night time. The dose you take may be gradually increased and you will be advised on how and when to do this. Do not take a higher dose than you have been prescribed.

If you forget to take a dose do not worry, skip the missed dose and then continue with your next dose as usual.

You will be given an initial 4 week prescription and we will write to your GP so that they can continue prescribing Pregabalin if it suits you, so make sure you get an appointment with them before your medication runs out.

### **Precautions**

- Please make sure all health professionals seeing you are aware of any medication that you take, including herbal remedies.
- Make sure all medications are stored safely and out of sight of children.
- Check the expiry date of your medication before using it.

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### **Contact details**

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Pain Management Services on:

0121 507 4344/ 5602

Monday – Friday, 9am-4pm

If you have any problems outside of these times, or are experiencing severe side effects, please contact your GP.

### **Further information**

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk) and [www.swbhengage.com](http://www.swbhengage.com) or follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

### **Sources used for the information in this leaflet**

- British National Formulary 64, section 4.7.3 'Neuropathic pain', September 2012
- British National Formulary 64, section 4.8.1 'Control of the epilepsies, Gabapentin and Pregabalin', September 2012
- The Cochrane Library, 'Pregabalin for acute and chronic pain in adults', January 2010

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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