

Gabapentin

Your child needs to take the medicine called gabapentin (say: GA-ba-pen-tin). This information sheet explains what gabapentin does, how to give it and what side effects or problems your child may have when they take this medicine.

What is gabapentin?

Gabapentin is a medication used to treat seizure disorders and long-term pain problems such as nerve pain. You may hear gabapentin referred to by its trade name Neurontin.

Before giving gabapentin to your child

Tell your child's doctor if your child is:

- allergic to gabapentin or other medicines

Talk with your child's doctor or pharmacist if your child has any of the following conditions. Precautions may need to be taken with this medicine if your child has:

- kidney disease
- thoughts of suicide
- depression

How should you give your child gabapentin?

Follow these instructions when giving your child gabapentin:

- Give your child this medicine exactly as your child's health care provider has instructed, even if your child seems better.
- Talk to your child's health care provider before you stop giving this medicine for any reason. Your child may become ill if he or she stops taking this medicine suddenly.

- Do not increase or decrease the amount of medicine without speaking with your child's health care provider first.
- Gabapentin can be given with or without food. Give it with food if it causes an upset stomach.
- If your child has trouble swallowing the gabapentin capsule whole, you may open the capsule and sprinkle the capsule contents into a small amount of water or apple sauce, for immediate use. Use small amounts of water or apple sauce to ensure that your child drinks or eats the full amount, and thus receives the total dose prescribed. Also, be sure to look and see that all the capsule contents are removed when you open the capsule, to ensure that your child receives the full dose.

What should you do if your child misses a dose of gabapentin?

- Give the medicine as soon as you remember.
- If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose. Give the next dose at the regular time.
- Do not give your child two doses to make up for one missed dose.

How long does gabapentin take to work?

If your child is taking gabapentin for pain, it may take several weeks to see the full effect.

What are the possible side effects of gabapentin?

Your child may have some of these side effects while he or she takes gabapentin. Check with your child's doctor if your child continues to

have any of these side effects, if they do not go away or if they bother your child:

- drowsiness
- tiredness
- poor coordination
- dizziness
- weight gain
- blurry vision
- upset stomach, vomiting

Most of the following side effects are not common, but they may be a sign of a serious problem. Call your child's doctor right away or take your child to the nearest emergency department if your child experiences any of these side effects:

- worsening seizures (if your child is taking gabapentin for seizures)
- swelling of the face, tongue or lips
- sudden trouble in swallowing or breathing
- shortness of breath

What safety measures should you take when your child is using gabapentin?

- There are some medicines that should not be taken together with gabapentin; the dose of gabapentin or the other medicine may need to be adjusted. It is important to tell your doctor and pharmacist if your child takes any other medications (prescription, over the counter or herbal).
- This medicine may cause your child to be less alert. Watch your child's activities closely until you see how gabapentin affects them. You may also have your child avoid tasks that require alertness, such as riding a bicycle, driving or playing contact sports.

- Do not stop giving your child gabapentin suddenly, talk to your child's doctor first. They may want to slowly decrease the dose of gabapentin before stopping it to prevent withdrawal.
- Keep your appointments with the doctor to have your child checked regularly.

What other information should I know about gabapentin?

Keep a list of all medications your child is on and show the list to the doctor or pharmacist.

Do not share your child's medicine with others and do not give anyone else's medicine to your child.

Make sure you always have enough gabapentin to last through weekends, holidays and vacations. Call your pharmacy at least two days before your child runs out of medicine to order refills.

Keep gabapentin capsules at room temperature in a cool, dry place away from sunlight. Do NOT store it in the bathroom or kitchen.

Do not keep any medicines that are out of date. Check with your pharmacist about the best way to throw away outdated or leftover medicines.

Keep gabapentin out of your child's sight and reach, and locked up in a safe place. If your child takes too much gabapentin, call the Ontario Poison Centre at one of these numbers. These calls are free.

- Call 416-813-5900 if you live in Toronto.

- Call 1-800-268-9017 if you live somewhere else in Ontario.
- If you live outside of Ontario, call your local Poison Information Centre.

Disclaimer: The information in this Family Med-aid is accurate at the time of printing. It

provides a summary of information about gabapentin and does not contain all possible information about this medicine. Not all side effects are listed. If you have any questions or want more information about gabapentin, speak to your health care provider.

