



Gabapentin for Fibromyalgia

Gabapentin (gaba-PEN-tin) is marketed in Canada officially for treating epilepsy (seizures). This drug is used off label for fibromyalgia.

How does it work

Gabapentin calms overactive nerves by blocking certain calcium channels in the brain which reduces the release of chemicals that cause pain.

What are the side effects

All medications have positive effects (what we want) and negative side effects (what we don't want). Starting at a low dose and increasing slowly, as your body adjusts, can reduce negative side effects.

Common side effects include sedation, dizziness, ataxia (lack of coordination of muscles), fatigue, nystagmus (uncontrollable eye movements) and tremor. Before operating machinery or driving, know how this medication affects you.

When should this medication NOT be used

Increased drowsiness and impaired thinking may occur when combining gabapentin with opioids, drugs with sedative effects, cannabis and alcohol. Be sure to tell your health provider about all medications, both prescription and non-prescription and any natural health products or supplements that you take along with all existing medical conditions.



What is a Typical Dose for Fibromyalgia

It can take several weeks before the full effect of this medication is felt. The starting dose is 100mg at bedtime, increasing by 100mg each week up to 600mg at bedtime. Daytime doses may be introduced starting with 100mg in the morning, increasing slowly while maintaining bedtime doses. A mid-day dose may be introduced and slowly increased to a maximum of 2400mg daily in divided doses. Daytime doses may be lower than bedtime doses to minimize daytime drowsiness and dizziness.

Do not stop doses suddenly. Slowly decrease doses to discontinuation to avoid withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety, insomnia, nausea, pains, sweating, tremor, headache, depression, feeling abnormal, dizziness, and malaise.

People tolerate drugs differently. Always discuss medications with your prescriber and pharmacist to ensure that this is the correct medication for you. Considerations include other drugs you may be taking (prescription and over-the-counter), natural supplements and other health conditions you may have.

