



# Gabapentin

**Generic Name:** gabapentin (GA ba PEN tin)

**Brand Names:** *Gralise, Horizant, Neurontin*

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## What is gabapentin?

**Gabapentin** is an anti-epileptic drug, also called an **anticonvulsant**. It affects chemicals and nerves in the body that are involved in the cause of seizures and some types of pain.

Gabapentin is used in adults to treat **neuropathic pain (nerve pain)** caused by herpes virus or shingles (herpes zoster).

The Gralise brand of gabapentin is indicated for the management of neuropathic pain only. It is not used for epilepsy.

The Horizant brand of gabapentin, in addition to treating neuropathic pain, is also used to treat **restless legs syndrome (RLS)**.

The Neurontin brand of gabapentin is also used to treat **seizures** in adults and children who are at least 3 years old, in addition to neuropathic pain.

**Use only the brand and form of gabapentin your doctor has prescribed.** Check your medicine each time you get a refill to make sure you receive the correct form.

## Important information

Some people have thoughts about suicide while taking this medicine. Children taking gabapentin may have behavior changes. Stay alert to changes in your mood or symptoms. Report any new or worsening symptoms to your doctor.

**Do not stop using gabapentin suddenly**, even if you feel fine.

## Before taking this medicine

You should not use gabapentin if you are allergic to it.

To make sure this medicine is safe for you, tell your doctor if you have ever had:

- lung disease, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD);
- kidney disease (or if you are on dialysis);
- diabetes;
- depression, a mood disorder, or suicidal thoughts or actions;

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- a seizure (unless you take gabapentin to treat seizures);
- liver disease;
- heart disease; or
- are taking an anti-depressant or sedating medication; or
- (for patients with RLS) if you are a day sleeper or work a night shift.

Some people have thoughts about suicide while taking this medicine. Your doctor should check your progress at regular visits. Your family or other caregivers should also be alert to changes in your mood or symptoms.

It is not known whether this medicine will harm an unborn baby. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.

Seizure control is very important during pregnancy, and having a seizure could harm both mother and baby. **Do not start or stop taking gabapentin for seizures without your doctor's advice, and tell your doctor right away if you become pregnant.**

Gabapentin can pass into breast milk, but effects on the nursing baby are not known. Ask your doctor about any risk.

## How should I take gabapentin?

Take gabapentin exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Follow all directions on your prescription label. Do not take this medicine in larger or smaller amounts or for longer than recommended.

Both **Gralise** and **Horizant** should be taken with food.

Neurontin can be taken with or without food, but should be taken with water.

If you break a Neurontin tablet and take only half of it, take the other half at your next dose. Any tablet that has been broken should be used as soon as possible or within a few days.

Swallow the capsule or tablet whole and do not crush, chew, break, or open it.

Measure **liquid medicine** carefully. Use the dosing syringe provided, or use a medicine dose-measuring device (not a kitchen spoon).

**If your doctor changes your brand, strength, or type of gabapentin, your dosage needs may change.** Ask your pharmacist if you have any questions about the new kind of gabapentin you receive at the pharmacy.

Do not stop using gabapentin suddenly, even if you feel fine. Stopping suddenly may cause increased seizures. Follow your doctor's instructions about tapering your dose.

Wear a medical alert tag or carry an ID card stating that you have seizures. Any medical care provider who treats you should know that you take seizure medication.

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This medicine can cause unusual results with certain medical tests. Tell any doctor who treats you that you are using this medicine.

Store both **tablets** and **capsules** at room temperature away from light and moisture.

Store the **liquid** medicine in the refrigerator. Do not freeze.

**See also:**

**Gabapentin dosage information** (in more detail)

## What happens if I miss a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Be sure to take the medicine with food. Skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your next scheduled dose. Do not take extra medicine to make up the missed dose.

## What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222.

## What should I avoid while taking gabapentin?

Avoid driving or hazardous activity until you know how this medicine will affect you. Your reactions could be impaired.

Avoid taking an antacid within 2 hours before or after you take gabapentin. Antacids can make it harder for your body to absorb gabapentin.

Drinking alcohol with this medicine can cause side effects.

## Gabapentin side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have **signs of an allergic reaction to gabapentin**: hives; difficult breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

**Seek medical treatment if you have a serious drug reaction that can affect many parts of your body.** Symptoms may include: skin rash, fever, swollen glands, muscle aches, severe weakness, unusual bruising, upper stomach pain, or yellowing of your skin or eyes. This reaction may occur several weeks after you began using gabapentin.

Report any new or worsening symptoms to your doctor, such as: mood or behavior changes, anxiety, panic attacks, trouble sleeping, or if you feel impulsive, irritable, agitated, hostile, aggressive, restless, hyperactive (mentally or physically), depressed, or have thoughts about suicide or hurting yourself.

Call your doctor at once if you have:

- weak or shallow breathing;
- blue-colored skin, lips, fingers, and toes;
- confusion, extreme drowsiness or weakness;

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- problems with balance or muscle movement;
- unusual or involuntary eye movements; or
- increased seizures.

**Gabapentin can cause life-threatening breathing problems.** A person caring for you should seek emergency medical attention if you have slow breathing with long pauses, blue colored lips, or if you are hard to wake up. Breathing problems may be more likely in older adults or in people with COPD.

**Some side effects are more likely in children taking gabapentin.** Contact your doctor if the child taking this medicine has any of the following side effects:

- changes in behavior;
- memory problems;
- trouble concentrating; or
- acting restless, hostile, or aggressive.

Common gabapentin side effects may include:

- headache;
- dizziness, drowsiness, tiredness;
- problems with balance or eye movements; or
- (in children) fever, nausea, vomiting.

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

**See also:**

**Gabapentin side effects** (in more detail)

## What other drugs will affect gabapentin?

Taking gabapentin with other drugs that make you sleepy can worsen this effect. Ask your doctor before taking a sleeping pill, narcotic medication, muscle relaxer, or medicine for anxiety, depression, or seizures.

Other drugs may interact with gabapentin, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products. Tell your doctor about all your current medicines and any medicine you start or stop using.

**See also:**

**Gabapentin drug interactions** (in more detail)

## Further information

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Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use gabapentin only for the indication prescribed.

Always consult your healthcare provider to ensure the information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances.

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### **Related questions**

- **Gabapentin, impotence and other problems?**
- **What is the difference between Lyrica and gabapentin?**