

**Patient
Information**

Pregabalin for the treatment of vulvodynia

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about the medication pregabalin which you have been prescribed to reduce the pain of vulvodynia.

Vulvodynia is pain in the vulva (area around the outside of the vagina) that lasts at least 3 months but does not have a specific cause.

Why have I been prescribed this medication?

You have been prescribed pregabalin as it is used to treat persistent pain and is effective for pain such as burning, shooting and stabbing nerve pain, and pain that keeps you awake at night.

You have not been prescribed this medication for epilepsy.

How does pregabalin work?

It is not fully understood how pregabalin works. However, it is thought to dampen down excessive electrical activity in the brain and peripheral nerves, which in turn reduces your pain.

How do I take pregabalin?

The starting dose is 75 mg of pregabalin, twice a day. You will then double this dose every week until you are taking the maximum dose of 300mg, twice a day, provided that you are not having any side effects.

You will not need to continue to increase the dose if you reach a suitable level of symptom relief at a lower dose. This will vary for each patient.

You may notice some benefit within a few days. However, it can take up to 1 month for the medication to be fully effective.

Reference No.

GHP11884_01_25

Department

Pharmacy

Review due

January 2028

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You should swallow pregabalin capsules or tablets whole, with a drink of water or juice. Do not chew them.

You can take pregabalin with or without food but it is best to do the same each day.

Try to space your doses evenly through the day. For example, you could take the medication first thing in the morning and at bedtime.

It is important not to stop taking pregabalin suddenly, even if you feel fine. Stopping pregabalin suddenly can cause serious problems.

If you are taking pregabalin and stop suddenly, you may have a severe withdrawal syndrome. This can have unpleasant symptoms, including:

- anxiety
- difficulty sleeping
- feeling sick
- pain
- sweating
- seizures

It is possible to prevent withdrawal seizures and other symptoms by gradually reducing the dose of pregabalin over a number of weeks. Please speak to your GP about this.

Possible side effects

Important: Pregabalin can cause drowsiness. Do not drive or operate heavy machinery if you feel drowsy.

Pregabalin is usually well tolerated, however there are some common and less common side effects.

Common side effects include dizziness, unsteadiness, sleepiness and blurred vision.

Some patients may feel more tired than normal, suffer from visual side effects, nausea (feeling sick), weight gain or memory loss but these are usually minor.

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It is important to continue with pregabalin as some of these symptoms will disappear after a few weeks.

Patients treated with pregabalin will be monitored by their GP for symptoms of pregabalin misuse, abuse or dependence, such as development of tolerance, dose escalation and drug-seeking behaviour.

Patients will also be monitored for signs of suicidal thoughts by their GP and behaviours and appropriate treatment will be considered. Patients (and carers of patients) are advised to seek medical advice from their GP if signs of suicidal thoughts and ideas or behaviour happen. Stopping the pregabalin treatment will be considered in the case of suicidal thoughts and behaviour.

If you suffer any severe side effects as the dose is increased, you can reduce to the previous dose that was acceptable for you. Do this rather than stopping the medication.

Alcohol will add to the effects of pregabalin, so please be careful if you drink alcohol while taking this medication as you may become drowsier than expected.

What if I forget a dose?

You should take a missed dose as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your medication as normal.

Do not take a double dose to make up for the missed one.

Is pregabalin suitable for everyone?

Pregabalin is not suitable for everyone, please talk to your doctor if you:

- are allergic to any medications.
- are taking any other medications or herbal medicines and this has not been discussed with the person who prescribed pregabalin.
- are taking any medications that cause drowsiness (for example; strong pain relief such as morphine).
- are pregnant or breastfeeding, or planning to become pregnant.
- have kidney or liver problems.

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If you are taking antacid medication, it is best to wait for 2 hours after taking it before taking pregabalin.

Contact information

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the dermatology team via the secretary's below:

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Tel: 0300 422 5589

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Content reviewed: January 2025

Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85