



Keep and Copy Series



YOU AND YOUR TREATMENT: STARTING ON YOUR MEDICATION FOR PERIPHERAL PAIN: PREGABALIN

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WHAT IS THIS MEDICINE FOR?

Pregabalin is an effective new therapy used to relieve neuropathic pain (pain from damaged nerves), which can occur in your arms, hands, fingers, legs, feet or toes if you have diabetes, or in the area of the rash if you have had shingles (a painful rash that occurs after infection with herpes zoster). It is also used to treat fibromyalgia (a long-lasting condition that may cause pain, muscle stiffness and tenderness, tiredness and difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep). Pregabalin is in a class of medications called anticonvulsants. It works by decreasing the number of pain signals that are sent out by damaged nerves in the body.

HOW SHOULD I TAKE IT?

Pregabalin comes as a capsule and is taken by mouth with or without food, usually two or three times a day. Take it at around the same times every day. Follow the directions on your prescription label carefully and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand.

Your doctor will probably start you on a low dose of pregabalin (75 mg daily) and may gradually increase your dose during the first week of treatment. Take it exactly as directed by your doctor.

Pregabalin may be habit forming. It can help control your symptoms of pain but will not cure the condition. It may take several weeks or longer before you feel the full benefit of pregabalin. Continue to take it even if you feel well and are experiencing less pain. Do not stop taking pregabalin without talking to your doctor. If you suddenly stop taking it, you may experience withdrawal symptoms, including trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, nausea, diarrhoea, headaches or seizures.

WHAT SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS SHOULD I TAKE?

- Tell your doctor and pharmacist what other prescription (particularly blood pressure-lowering tablets) and non-prescription medications, vitamins, nutritional supplements and herbal products you are taking or plan to take as they can affect the way in which pregabalin works. The doctor may then need to change the dose of your medications.

- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, or if you or your partner plans to become pregnant.
- You should know that pregabalin may make you dizzy or drowsy. Do not drive a car, operate machinery, or do other dangerous activities until you know how this medication affects you. Ask your doctor when you can continue these activities.
- Do not drink alcohol while taking pregabalin. Alcohol can add to the drowsiness caused by this medication.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FORGET A DOSE?

If you forget to take a dose and remember a few hours later, take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

WHAT SIDE EFFECTS CAN THIS MEDICATION CAUSE?

Pregabalin may cause side effects. Tell your doctor if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away: tiredness, dizziness, headache, dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, constipation, gas, bloating, 'high' or elevated mood, speech problems, difficulty concentrating or paying attention, lack of coordination, increased appetite, weight gain, swelling of the arms, hands, feet, ankles or lower legs and back pain.

Some side effects, such as anxiety and new or worsening depression can be serious and may be experienced immediately after starting the treatment. If you experience any serious symptoms, call your doctor immediately.

Always ask for and read the drug information leaflet in your medication package. If you do not understand it, please ask your health professional.

The current South African indications for Lyrica (pregabalin) use are painful diabetic neuropathy and post-herpetic neuralgia.

Source: *Medline Plus Health Topics*

