

# Gabapentinoids (Gabapentin, Pregabalin)

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Why have I received this letter?

We are contacting you as part of our efforts to ensure safe and effective prescribing whilst being responsible with NHS resources. Our records suggest that you are taking a medication known as a gabapentinoid (gabapentin or pregabalin).

These medicines are sometimes used for nerve-related (neuropathic) pain, fibromyalgia, or seizures. Some people may also be prescribed them for anxiety.

What do I need to know?

- Gabapentinoids can be helpful for certain types of nerve pain, but the benefits for long-term use are less clear.
- There are important risks with these medicines:
  - Dependence and withdrawal: they can cause dependence, and stopping suddenly can lead to withdrawal symptoms (anxiety, insomnia, sweating, pain, nausea, seizures).
  - Misuse risk: they are now controlled drugs in the UK due to risk of misuse.
  - Side effects: dizziness, sleepiness, weight gain, swelling of ankles, low mood, confusion.
  - Falls and accidents: these medicines can increase your risk of falls, especially in older people.
  - Breathing problems and risk of death: gabapentinoids can slow breathing, particularly when taken with opioids, benzodiazepines, alcohol, or other sedating medicines. This has sadly been linked with some deaths.

Should I stop my medication?

- Do not stop suddenly. This can be dangerous and cause severe withdrawal symptoms.
- If you feel your medication is not helping, or you would like to consider reducing or stopping, please arrange an appointment with your GP or pharmacist to discuss a safe plan.

How else can I manage my pain?

Managing chronic pain is challenging and often involves a combination of physical, psychological, and lifestyle approaches. Evidence shows that learning about chronic pain and accessing self-management tools can improve quality of life and reduce reliance on medication. You may find the following resources helpful:

- Live Well with Pain: <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/>

- Retrain Pain: <https://www.retrainpain.org/>
- Tame the Beast: <https://www.tamethebeast.org/>
- Flippin' Pain: <https://www.flippinpain.co.uk/>
- NHS – Ways to manage chronic pain: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/pain/ways-to-manage-chronic-pain/>
- Pain Toolkit: <https://www.pain toolkit.org/>
- British Pain Society – People with Pain: <https://www.britishpainsociety.org/people-with-pain/>
- Pain Concern: <https://painconcern.org.uk/>
- Action on Pain: <https://action-on-pain.co.uk/>
- Local service: E.M.P.O.W.E.R. – East Riding Community Pain Management: <https://www.chcpcic.org.uk/pages/e-m-p-o-w-e-r>

Where can I find more information?

- NHS: Gabapentin: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/gabapentin/> | Pregabalin: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/pregabalin/>
- NICE: Neuropathic pain management: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg173>