

Pregabalin (Lyrica®)

Why is this medication prescribed?

- To treat pain from damaged nerves (neuropathic pain) and fibromyalgia. Pregabalin works by dampening the pain signals sent through the body's nervous system.
- For sleep or anxiety when used to treat pain in individuals with sleep or anxiety difficulties.

How should this medication be used?

- Pregabalin comes as a capsule in the following strengths: 25 mg, 50 mg, 75 mg, 150 mg, 225 mg, and 300 mg. (*The 225 mg capsule strength is not covered by the Ontario government drug plan*).
- It is typically taken by mouth 2 or 3 times a day, at the same time each day.
- To minimize side effects, your doctor will prescribe pregabalin at a low dose and increase the dose slowly. Taking the first dose at night is preferred.
 - The usual target dose for pain management is 300 - 450 mg/day (e.g., 150 mg twice or three times a day). The maximum dose of pregabalin is 600 mg/day.
- May be taken with or without food.
- Pregabalin is **NOT** a "pain killer" to be taken whenever pain becomes severe or for managing minor aches and pains. Pregabalin should be **taken on a consistent basis**, according to your doctor's orders to help you control long-term pain.
- Do **NOT** abruptly stop taking pregabalin without talking to your doctor. Sudden stopping of this medication can cause poor sleep, nausea, headache, anxiety, sweating or diarrhea. If for some reason pregabalin is no longer needed, your doctor will reduce your dose gradually.

When does this medication start to work?

- Although the pain-relieving properties of pregabalin may be noticed within 1 - 2 days of starting treatment, benefit is most likely to be achieved within 3 - 4 weeks of starting the drug.
- When slow dose increases are made for tolerability purposes, it may take longer to reach the target dose and achieve pain relief/functional improvement.

What is the risk of drug interactions with pregabalin?

Pregabalin has a low chance of causing drug interactions. However, there may be an additive effect when taken with other medications that cause drowsiness or dizziness (e.g., benzodiazepines or opioids).

What special precautions should I follow?

- Before using pregabalin talk to your doctor if you have/had any of the following health issues:
 - Kidney disease (Pregabalin is cleared from the body by the kidneys. If you have kidney problems, lower doses of pregabalin will be used.)

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- Congestive heart failure
 - Are pregnant or breastfeeding or this situation is likely in the near future
- When pregabalin is first tried, it is best to wait until your body adjusts to this new medication or a dose change before driving or operating machinery.
 - Excessive drowsiness and impaired coordination can occur if pregabalin is taken with alcohol. It is best to avoid alcohol while taking pregabalin.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

- Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it unless it is almost time for the next dose. In this case, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule.
- Do **NOT** take a double dose to make up for a missed dose.

What side effects can this medication cause?

All medicines can cause side effects, which can range from mild to severe. The most common side effects of pregabalin are:

- Drowsiness, dizziness, difficulty with concentration/attention
- Dry mouth → use sugarfree gum/lozenges or Biotene® mouth rinses to help reduce this
- Swelling of the feet or lower legs → occurs in 4 - 16% of patients taking pregabalin
- Weight gain → occurs in 2 - 9% of patients taking pregabalin
- Blurred vision

Some side effects, such as drowsiness and dizziness, tend to improve/resolve in 4 - 6 weeks with continued pregabalin treatment. Some side effects, such as swelling of the feet/lower legs and weight gain, are dose-dependent, which means they are more likely to occur at higher pregabalin doses than at lower doses.

Inform your doctor **immediately** if you notice:

- Changes in coordination (e.g., clumsiness or falls)
- New difficulties with mood or worsening mood, behavioural or emotional changes, or have thoughts of self-harm when taking pregabalin

Remember that your doctor has prescribed this medication because he or she has judged that the benefit to you is greater than the risk of side effects. Many people using this medication do not have serious side effects.

What storage conditions are needed for this medication?

- Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children.
- Store at room temperature, away from excess heat/moisture (not in the kitchen or bathroom).
- If at any point in the future pregabalin is stopped by your doctor, return any remaining supply to your community pharmacist for proper medication disposal.

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