

# DrugFAQs

## Neurontin

*Generic name: Gabapentin*

*Brand names: Neurontin*

### Why is Neurontin prescribed?

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Neurontin has two uses. First, it may be prescribed with other medications to treat partial seizures (the type in which symptoms are limited). It can be used whether or not the seizures eventually become general and result in loss of consciousness. Second, it can be used to relieve the burning nerve pain that sometimes persists for months or even years after an attack of shingles (herpes zoster).

### Most important fact about Neurontin

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Take Neurontin exactly as directed by your doctor. To effectively control your seizures, it is important that you take Neurontin 3 times a day, approximately every 8 hours. You should not go longer than 12 hours without a dose of medication.

### How should you take Neurontin?

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Do not increase or decrease dosage of Neurontin without your doctor's approval; and do not suddenly stop taking it, as this may cause an increase in the frequency of your seizures. If you are taking an antacid such as Maalox, take Neurontin at least 2 hours after the antacid. You may take Neurontin with or without food.

--*If you miss a dose...*Try not to allow more than 12 hours to pass between doses. Do not double doses.

--*Storage instructions...*Store capsules and tablets at room temperature. Keep the [oral](#) solution refrigerated.

### What side effects may occur?

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Side effects cannot be anticipated. If any develop or change in intensity, inform your doctor as soon as possible. Only your doctor can determine if it is safe for you to continue taking Neurontin.

- *When taken for epilepsy, more common side effects may include:*  
Blurred, dimmed, or double vision, bronchitis (in children), dizziness, drowsiness, fatigue, fever (in children), involuntary eye movement, itchy, runny nose, lack of muscular coordination, nausea, tremor, viral infection (in children), vomiting, weight increase (in children)
- *When taken for nerve pain, more common side effects may include:*  
Accidental injury, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, drowsiness, dry mouth, headache, infection, lack of muscular coordination, nausea, swelling in arms and legs, vomiting, weakness

A wide variety of uncommon and rare side effects have also been reported. If you develop any new or unusual symptoms while taking Neurontin, be sure to let your doctor know.

### **Why should Neurontin not be prescribed?**

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You should not take Neurontin if you have ever had an allergic reaction to it.

### **Special warnings about Neurontin**

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Neurontin causes some people to become drowsy and less alert. Combining it with morphine makes this more likely. Do not drive or operate dangerous machinery or participate in any hazardous activity that requires full mental alertness until you are certain Neurontin does not have this effect on you. In children, Neurontin occasionally triggers behavioral problems such as unstable emotions, hostility, aggression, hyperactivity, and lack of concentration. However, such problems (if they occur) are usually mild. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have any kidney problems or are on hemodialysis, as your doctor will need to adjust your dosage of Neurontin. Tell your doctor about any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter drugs.

### **Possible food and drug interactions when taking Neurontin**

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If Neurontin is taken with certain other drugs, the effects of either can be increased, decreased, or altered. It is especially important to check with your

doctor before combining Neurontin with the following:

Antacids such as Maalox  
Hydrocodone (Lortab, Vicodin)  
Naproxen (Naprosyn)  
Morphine (Kadian, MS Contin)

### **Special information if you are pregnant or breastfeeding**

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The effects of Neurontin on pregnant women have not been adequately studied, although birth defects have occurred in babies whose mothers took an antiepileptic medication while they were pregnant. The drug should be used during pregnancy only if clearly needed. If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, tell your doctor immediately. This medication may appear in breast milk and could affect a nursing infant. It should be used by mothers who nurse their babies only if its benefits clearly outweigh the risks.

### **Recommended dosage**

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#### **EPILEPSY**

##### *Adults and Children 12 Years and Over*

The recommended starting dose is 300 milligrams three times a day. After that, the usual daily dosage ranges from 900 to 1,800 milligrams divided into 3 doses.

##### *Children 3 to 12 Years of Age*

Daily dosage is calculated according to the child's weight. The usual starting dosage is 10 to 15 milligrams per 2.2 pounds. Dosage is then increased over a period of three days to 40 milligrams per 2.2 pounds for children aged 3 and 4, and 25 to 35 milligrams per 2.2 pounds for children aged 5 and over. The total daily dosage is taken as 3 smaller doses throughout the day.

#### **PAIN FOLLOWING A SHINGLES ATTACK**

Treatment typically starts with a single 300-milligram dose on the first day, two 300-milligram doses on the second day, and three 300-milligram doses on the third day. If necessary, the doctor may increase the daily total to as much as 1,800 milligrams, divided into three doses. Whether you are taking Neurontin for epilepsy or pain, the doctor will lower the dose if you have poor kidney function. Also, if Neurontin is discontinued or another drug is added to therapy, your doctor will do this gradually, over a 1-week period.

## Overdosage

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Any medication taken in excess can have serious consequences. If you suspect an overdose, seek medical treatment immediately.

- *Symptoms of Neurontin overdose may include:*  
Diarrhea, double vision, drowsiness, lethargy, slurred speech