

Gabapentin

(gab-ah-pen-tin)

Category: Anticonvulsant/Nerve Pain Reliever

Other Names for this Medication: Neurontin®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** 100 mg, 300 mg, 400 mg, 600 mg, & 800 mg tablets or capsules. Compounded smaller sized capsules and a xylitol-free oral liquid may be available.

This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication. It is to help answer commonly asked questions and help you give the medication safely and effectively to your animal. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

Key Information

- ▶ May be given with or without food. If your pet vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ Do not give gabapentin within 2 hours of receiving antacids.
- ▶ Drowsiness and loss of coordination are the most common side effects.

How is this medication useful?

Gabapentin is an anticonvulsant and analgesic (pain reliever) drug. Veterinarians may prescribe gabapentin for seizures (convulsions) in dogs and cats or to treat chronic pain associated with nerve inflammation or cancer in dogs, cats, and horses.

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in humans, but it is not officially approved for use in animals. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe products containing this drug in different species or for other conditions in certain situations. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this drug is the most appropriate choice.

What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?

Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.

- ▶ Other drugs can interact with gabapentin, so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your animal may have now or has had in the past.
- ▶ If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian how well the treatment did or didn't work.
- ▶ If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your animal has developed in the past.

When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug **SHOULD NOT** be used in:

- ▶ Animals that are allergic to it or drugs like it (eg, pregabalin).

NOTE! The oral liquid manufactured for humans contains the sweetener xylitol; this is toxic to dogs and should not be used in dogs.

This drug should be used **WITH CAUTION** in patients:

- ▶ That have kidney disease.

If your animal has any of these conditions or signs, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Common, but not serious side effects include:

- ▶ Tiredness (lack of energy)
- ▶ Loss of coordination.

You don't have to be overly concerned if you see any of these unless they are severe, worsen, or continue to be a problem. Contact your veterinarian if this happens.

If my animal gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?

One-time overdoses of gabapentin are unlikely to cause more than sleepiness, loss of coordination, and diarrhea. If the human liquid form of gabapentin is overdosed, life threatening drops in blood sugar levels and liver damage are possible. If you witness or suspect an overdose, contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center for further advice. Animal poison control centers that are open 24 hours a day include: **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435) and **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661); a consultation fee is charged for these services.

How should this medication be given?

For this medication to work, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. It's a good idea to always check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

- ▶ May be given with or without food, but gabapentin is most effective when it is given right before feeding. Tablets may be crushed or placed in a favorite food to encourage your animal to take the medication. If your pet vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ Compounded liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes.
- ▶ If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- ▶ If you want to stop giving the medication before the prescription is completed, first contact your veterinarian. There may be an important reason to continue giving the medication until it's gone. When gabapentin is used for seizures, it should be gradually withdrawn or seizures can occur.

What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?

If you miss a dose, wait and give the next dose when it is usually time to do so. Do not double-up doses or give an extra dose.

How should I store this medication?

- ▶ Store this medication in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder (ie, pill minder) container at room temperature; protect tablets from moisture.
- ▶ If your veterinarian or pharmacist has made (compounded) a special formulation for your animal, follow the storage recommendations and expiration date for the product.
- ▶ Keep away from children and other animals.

Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other pets?

There are no specific precautions required when handling this medication unless you are allergic to it. Wash your hands after handling any medication.

How should I dispose of this medication if I don't use it all?

- ▶ Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug "take-back" program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix the drug with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- ▶ Do not save left over medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

- ▶ Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Check rules and regulations before entering your animal in a competition while this medication is being administered.
- ▶ If your animal is getting oral antacids, including milk of magnesia or aluminum hydroxide, don't give within 2 hours of the gabapentin dose. Antacids can reduce the amount of gabapentin absorbed.

If you have any other questions or concerns about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.