

Dear Patient,

You have been given this letter because you have been taking Pregabalin. Pregabalin or Lyrica is a type of medicine known as anti-epileptic medicines, but it is also used for neuropathic pain (long lasting pain caused by nerve damage) and generalised anxiety disorder.

Whilst this medication can be very helpful for a lot of patients we know it does not work for everyone. It can also cause some side effects. Sometimes these side effects are mild and will go away after a few days but if they persist it is worth considering if this is the right medication for you. The most common ones are listed below.

Common pregabalin side-effects	What can I do if I experience this?
Feeling dizzy, or sleepy; blurred or double vision	Do not drive and do not use tools or machines
Headache, back pain, other aches and pains	Drink plenty of water and ask your pharmacist to recommend a suitable painkiller. If the pain continues, let your doctor know
Dry mouth	Try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking sugar-free sweets
Feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting), wind (flatulence), bloated tummy (abdomen)	Stick to simple meals - avoid rich or spicy food
Constipation	Eat a well-balanced diet and drink several glasses of water each day
Diarrhoea	Drink plenty of water to replace lost fluids
Increased appetite, weight gain, mood changes, nose or throat infections, difficulties sleeping, reduced sexual desire, erectile dysfunction, feeling unsteady or shaky, memory problems, speech problems, tingling 'pins and needles' feelings, loss of concentration, muscle cramps, swollen feet or ankles	If any of these become troublesome, speak with your doctor for advice

Misuse of pregabalin has been reported. In view of this, and in view of pregabalin's known effects, it seems possible that dependence may develop in some regular users.

It is not safe to take pregabalin without a prescription. It is also dangerous to take pregabalin with alcohol and some other drugs. Alcohol and some drugs depress the central nervous system, which affects a person's breathing. The drugs that do this include:

- pregabalin and gabapentin
- benzodiazepines

- heroin and other opioids

This means that using any combination of these types of drugs with or without alcohol increases the risk of overdose and death. Pregabalin also lowers opioid tolerance meaning that the risk of overdose and death increases when they are used together with opioids.

Can I take this medication long-term?

Yes, if it helps. However if you are still in pain despite taking the medication then we'd suggest you try a "drug holiday" This means you taper off and stop your painkillers gradually by 5-10% of your dose every 2-4 weeks to see for sure whether they're helping or not. It's not unusual for pain to flare up a bit when doses are reduced and discontinued but that's to be expected. Once you're off them for a month you'll have a good idea as to whether they're making a positive difference to your life. If they are, feel free to restart them – try to find the lowest dose that works.

Modern management of chronic pain is geared away from drug therapy and more towards self-management where the patients take control of their lives and their pain with the use of physical therapies, emotional / mindfulness type practice plus pacing strategies.

If you've got any questions about this feel free to make an appointment with a doctor of your choice to discuss.

Best wishes and good luck!

Medical Team, Strand Surgery

Pain usually alerts us to an injury, like a fire alarm alerting us to a fire. That's fine – it tells our body to pay attention to the injury and make us rest and get better. But sometimes the pain goes on after the injury has healed. Or pain comes out of the blue for no apparent reason. If it goes on for more than 3 months we call it chronic (or persistent / long term) pain. Think of it as a faulty fire alarm – alerting us to danger... except there's no fire.

*Here are some links to other resources to help you manage chronic pain yourselves (with less emphasis on medications) and reduce the impact it has on your lives.
We hope you find it helpful*

- Video - Brain man understanding pain in less than 5 minutes
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KrUL8tOaQs>
- Live well with pain website – resources for chronic pain
<https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/>
- The NHS website about managing chronic pain <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/ways-to-manage-chronic-pain/>
- Podcast Feel better, Live more with Dr Rangan Chatterjee episode 310 how to heal chronic pain with Howard Schubiner