

Gabapentin Discharge Information for Primary Care

Date: _____

Patient: _____

Dear _____

This patient has been started on **gabapentin** as an anti-craving medication for alcohol use disorder (AUD).

Gabapentin is an anti-convulsant that is commonly used as an off-label treatment in AUD.

Gabapentin is used to treat acute alcohol withdrawal in people without a history of withdrawal seizures or delirium tremens, manage post-acute withdrawal symptoms, and as an anti-craving medication. It works by reducing the hyper-excitatory neurological symptoms of acute alcohol withdrawal, including tremor and anxiety, and symptoms of post-acute withdrawal syndrome such as dysphoria and insomnia that can last for weeks. As an anti-craving agent, gabapentin reduces heavy drinking days and increases non-drinking days. It can be useful for individuals who cannot take or have not benefited from naltrexone or acamprosate, or it can be used as an add-on to these medications.

Gabapentin is available in 100 mg, 300 mg, and 400 mg capsules. Gabapentin may be started for acute withdrawal management at doses of 300 mg three times daily. It can then be increased to 600 mg three times daily and 600–1200 mg at bedtime if required and as long as there is no sedation, to a maximum of 3600 mg daily. Once acute withdrawal is resolved, this dose can be tapered over three to five days or maintained at 300–600 mg three times daily (consider a dose of 100 mg three times daily for patients who are elderly, on sedating medications, or with renal insufficiency). Common side effects of gabapentin include dizziness, drowsiness, fatigue, and ataxia.

Therapeutic results are best when this medication is combined with counselling and/or community support.

Please keep the following considerations in mind:

- Alcohol and gabapentin are CNS depressants; patients should be counselled about potential risks of this combination with regards to sedation, falls, and driving.
- Gabapentin should not be prescribed to individuals experiencing active, persistent suicidal ideation.
- There should be continual evaluation for risks or signs of addiction with gabapentin use.
- Gabapentin can be continued as long as it is effective and tolerated. This medication should be tapered before discontinuation.

Please see the attached prescription that the patient was given on discharge. For ongoing substance-related support, please contact your local rapid access addiction medicine (RAAM) clinic at _____.

Sincerely,

Phone: _____ Fax: _____