

# Gabapentin Discharge Information for Primary Care

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Client: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

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

Gabapentin is an anticonvulsant that is commonly used as an off-label treatment in AUD. The nature of off-label prescribing has been communicated to your patient and they have consented to receiving this medication for treatment of AUD.

Gabapentin can be used to treat alcohol withdrawal, post-acute withdrawal symptoms, and as an anti-craving medication for AUD. It works by reducing the hyper-excitatory neurological symptoms of acute alcohol withdrawal, including tremor and anxiety, and symptoms of post-acute withdrawal syndrome that can last for weeks or months after alcohol cessation, including insomnia and dysphoria. Gabapentin can be useful for individuals who have not benefitted from or cannot take first-line anti-craving therapies (i.e., naltrexone and acamprosate) or as an add-on to these medications. It reduces heavy drinking days and increases rate of abstinence.

Gabapentin is provided in 100mg, 300mg, and 400mg capsules. A typical initial dose is 300mg daily, which can then be titrated by 300mg/day based on response and tolerability. A common target dose is 600mg TID. Common side effects of gabapentin include dizziness, drowsiness, fatigue, and ataxia.

Therapeutic results are best when anti-craving medications are combined with some form of addiction counselling or community support.

Clinical considerations:

- Alcohol and gabapentin are CNS depressing, and patient should be counselled about potential risks of this combination with regards to imbalance and falls.
- Gabapentin should not be prescribed to individuals experiencing active, persistent suicidal ideation.
- There should be continual evaluation for risks or signs of dependence and addiction with gabapentin use.
- Gabapentin can be continued as long as it is effective and tolerated, with a goal of at least six months on treatment. This medication should be tapered before discontinuation.

Given the consultative nature of our service, we will be transferring care and medication prescribing back to you.

- Current prescription: Gabapentin \_\_\_\_\_ mg [once daily / twice daily / three times daily].
- This prescription will end on \_\_\_\_\_ ; the client will require a renewal before then.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you require support in this transition or would benefit from further information. Rapid access addiction medicine (RAAM) clinics can be used for ongoing outpatient substance-related care.

The local RAAM clinic can be contacted at \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_