

## Did you know?

### If you use pregabalin with other depressant type drugs

(such as alcohol – even in small amounts) the effects are increased and as a result can lead to **drowsiness, sedation, respiratory depression and at the extreme, death** (i.e. accidental overdose).



There are reports of respiratory failure and coma in patients taking pregabalin and other central nervous system depressant drugs such as alcohol.



### If you obtain your pregabalin from a street dealer or an online website the drug you receive may not actually contain pregabalin –

instead it could be mixed in with other substances or be a completely different drug (or number of drugs) and so you can't be certain of experiencing the same or similar effects as you have had previously, increasing your risk of an adverse reaction or outcome.



...Mixing with other drugs can lead to **drowsiness, sedation, respiratory depression and at the extreme, death...**



### Getting help...

Your doctor or GP is your main point of contact. In an emergency visit your local Emergency Department or call an ambulance. For information on local drug and alcohol treatment and support services available in your area visit the 'Services Near You' section of the site:

[www.drugsandalcoholni.info](http://www.drugsandalcoholni.info)



If you're in crisis, experiencing distress or despair – you can get support:

**0808 808 8000**

**Lifeline**

24 hours,  
7 days a week  
and your call is free...

### Info, advice and support for organisations

If you are a community, voluntary or statutory organisation worried about pregabalin or any other type of drug and/or alcohol misuse issues in your locality or area of work your local Drug and Alcohol Coordination Team (DACT) Connections service.

### Get in touch

Your local DACT Connections Service can be contacted in relation to any alcohol and/or drug related concern or query that you may have — they will be able to advise you on how they, or your local DACT, can help.

| HSCT AREA | CONNECTIONS SERVICE EMAIL | CONNECTIONS SERVICE TEL NO |
|-----------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| BHSCT     | connections@bdact.info    | 028 9084 0555              |
| NHSCT     | connections@ndact.info    | 028 2568 9306              |
| SEHSCT    | connections@sedact.info   | 0800 254 5123              |
| SHSCT     | connections@sdact.info    | 028 3832 2714              |
| WHSCT     | connections@wdact.info    | 0800 254 5123              |



"Addressing drugs and alcohol together"



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**drugsand alcoholni**

"Addressing drugs and alcohol together"

**#Pregabalin**  
**#Lyrica#Buds#Budweisers**



ADDRESSING DRUGS AND ALCOHOL TOGETHER

## Who is this leaflet aimed at?

This booklet is primarily aimed at people who use pregabalin without a prescription (i.e. who haven't been prescribed the drug by a doctor).

However it may also be useful to people who overuse their prescribed amount, people who are considering taking pregabalin that isn't prescribed for them or for people who work with or care about a pregabalin user.

## Why this leaflet?

In the last few years the number of people who have been prescribed pregabalin has soared, as has the number of people who are using it illegally/recreationally. Drug and alcohol treatment and support service providers across Northern Ireland say that they are working with increasing numbers of people who have been struggling with their misuse of pregabalin.

Hospitals have also seen a significant rise in people presenting to emergency departments who have taken too much pregabalin and become seriously unwell as a result. This information is also supported by the community along with data gathered as part of the **RAPID Drug Bin Initiative**.\*

## Withdrawal symptoms

If you are using pregabalin without a prescription i.e. recreationally/ illegally and feel that you are becoming, or have become dependent on it do not stop taking it suddenly. Seek advice and support from either your GP or your local drug and alcohol treatment support service.

\* **RAPID**  
(Remove All Prescription and Illegal Drugs) where pregabalin is currently the most disposed of substance).



## What is pregabalin?

Pregabalin can be prescribed for anxiety, neuropathic pain, or epilepsy. It is now also being sourced illegally (via drug dealers and/or online websites) for recreational drug use. It comes in different strengths from 25mg to 300mg tablets.



## Can it cause harm?

Unless it has been prescribed by a medical professional and is being taken as directed by the doctor then there is a significant risk of harm, including overdose. This is particularly the case when recreational users are using large amounts and/or doses of it. It can also cause harm if it is mixed with other drugs (prescribed or illegal) and/or alcohol, if the user becomes heavily intoxicated or if a female user is pregnant.

## What other names has it got?

There are trade names for it just as diazepam has names like Valium. The most well-known trade name for pregabalin is Lyrica.

Most drugs that gain popularity among recreational users also get street names. **'Budweisers'** is a common street name for pregabalin, supposedly because some 300mg tablets are red and white in colour and their effect is a bit like alcohol. Other street names are 'Buds' or 'Phizers'.



## Risks

Like all drug use, even when that drug is prescribed, there may be risks involved in taking pregabalin. The only way to avoid all the risks is not to take it.

The main risks are

- Becoming very intoxicated
- Accidental falls, trips
- Overdose, especially seizures
- Birth defects in children if taken by a pregnant mother
- Dependence
- Problem use
- Death

“  
...talk to your doctor about changing, reducing or stopping.”

## Reducing risks

If you have been prescribed pregabalin – use it only as you have been directed to. If you are ever concerned by your use (or start to overuse) talk to your doctor about changing, reducing or stopping.

**If you are using pregabalin recreationally and do not want to stop, it would be important to remember and stick to the pointers outlined below to reduce risks:**

## Helpful pointers

**Start low and go slow – don't redose before the full effect of the earlier dose has come on.**

**Don't mix with other substances including alcohol**

**Look after your mates and if you are in any way concerned about someone – call an ambulance – don't delay.**

**Don't use pregabalin at all if you are pregnant.**

**If there comes a time when you want to reduce or stop.....do not stop using it suddenly – talk to a specialist (GP or drug and alcohol worker) first.**

## Pregabalin effects

- Light headed/dizziness
- Mild visual distortions
- Vivid imagination
- Disinhibition
- Dizziness
- Muddled/confused thoughts
- Clumsiness
- Drowsiness
- Thirst
- Weight gain
- Swelling of hands or feet
- Chest pain
- Wheezing



## The law

It is a Prescription Only Medication (POM), meaning that it has to be prescribed to you, you can't buy it in a pharmacy.

In recognition of the increased illegal/recreational use of pregabalin, in early 2016 the UK's chief advisory body to the government on drugs, the ACMD (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs), recommended that pregabalin become a class C controlled drug.

