

Is gabapentin safe for cats?

Medically reviewed by Carmen Pope, BPharm. Last updated on Jan 20, 2023.

[Gabapentin](#) is safe for cats and is commonly prescribed by veterinarians to treat pain, anxiety, and feline hyperesthesia syndrome. It has a low risk of side effects when taken at the correct dosage. Mild sedation and lethargy are the most common side effects but these tend to get better with continued dosing.

What is gabapentin used for in cats?

Gabapentin can reduce chronic pain caused by conditions such as arthritis or cancer. It may be used to treat pain associated with intervertebral disk disease.

Gabapentin is commonly used as a mild sedative to treat situational anxiety, for example, just before a vet visit, or for cats who are fearful around people or other animals.

It can help manage feline hyperesthesia syndrome. This is an area of extreme sensitivity on a cat's skin, which is almost always on the back, typically in the area right in front of the tail.

Gabapentin can also help manage seizures in cats, in addition to other medications.

Using gabapentin in cats and other pets is considered “off-label” which means it is not an FDA-approved indication in pets.

How does gabapentin work in cats?

Experts aren't sure exactly how gabapentin works to relieve pain, anxiety, or feline hypersensitivity syndrome but it is thought to inhibit the release of excitatory neurotransmitters. Gabapentin resembles a naturally occurring inhibitory neurotransmitter called GABA (γ -aminobutyric acid), which is involved with the transmission of nerve signals within the brain and spinal cord.

How much gabapentin should I give my cat?

Dosages of gabapentin for cats can vary depending on their age, weight, and what health issue they are suffering from. The usual dosages for pain in cats are 1.5 to 5mg per pound every 12 hours. For seizures, it is 2.5 to 5mg per pound every 8 to 12 hours. Some cats may be prescribed 10mg per pound every 6 hours.

Higher dosages may be prescribed occasionally by your vet.

Dosage Chart Gabapentin In Cats

Cat weight	Low dose (1.5mg/lb)	High dose (5mg/lb)
4lb (1.8kg)	6mg	20mg
6lb (2.7kg)	9mg	30mg
10lb (4.5kg)	15mg	50mg
15lb (6.8kg)	22.5mg	75mg
25lb (11.3kg)	37.5mg	125mg

How long does gabapentin take to work?

Gabapentin is quick acting, and an effect should be noticed one to two hours after administration when used to relieve situational anxiety. However, when gabapentin is used to treat pain, a low dosage is started initially, which is then titrated up slowly, which means it may take longer to see an effect. While your vet is titrating up the dosage, they will be using other medications to keep your cat comfortable until the gabapentin is working. When used to treat seizures gabapentin may take a few weeks to reduce seizure frequency.

The effects of gabapentin wear off quickly unless the cat has kidney or liver disease. This is why it is usually given two to three times a day.

How long can a cat stay on gabapentin?

There is no maximum time for a cat to remain on gabapentin. Some older cats will stay on it for the rest of their life as part of a management plan for arthritis pain.

What are the side effects of gabapentin in cats?

The most common side effect of gabapentin in cats is sedation, drowsiness, and lethargy which can be managed by starting with a low dosage of gabapentin and increasing it slowly. Most cats become tolerant of this side effect with continued dosing. Other side effects may include:

When starting gabapentin your cat may also seem a little uncoordinated initially, but this should also resolve with continued dosing. Sometimes, a cat may gain weight or develop diarrhea. Rarely, a cat may be allergic to gabapentin and they may have a reaction which is a sign to avoid giving gabapentin to your cat in the future.

Xylitol is used to sweeten commercially prepared gabapentin oral suspension and while this can be toxic to dogs, cats usually tolerate it well.

How does gabapentin make a cat feel?

Gabapentin makes your cat feel a little sleepy and possibly a little uncoordinated initially. They should become tolerant to these effects within a few days, especially if the dosage is started low and titrated up slowly.

Does gabapentin make cats sleepy?

Yes, gabapentin can make your cat sleepy initially but by starting with a small dose and gradually titrating it upwards, your cat should become tolerant to this effect.

Can gabapentin cause diarrhea or constipation in cats?

Gabapentin may cause diarrhea in some cats, but it does not usually cause vomiting or constipation unless it is being used at high dosages. If your cat develops any of these side effects, call your veterinarian.

Can I overdose my cat on gabapentin?

Although gabapentin is generally well tolerated in cats, like any medication, you can give too much of it. Always follow your vet's instructions and never try to increase the dosage yourself without their advice.

Symptoms of an overdose of gabapentin in cats include severe diarrhea, extreme sleepiness, lethargy, and incoordination; however, an overdose is not usually fatal. Seek veterinary advice immediately.

Do cats need to be weaned off gabapentin?

If gabapentin is being used to treat seizures in cats, then it should be tapered off slowly over a couple of weeks after long-term use and not abruptly discontinued because it can precipitate seizures.

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