



Drug FAQs for Members

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Fibromyalgia and Pregabalin (Lyrica)

What is fibromyalgia (FM)?

- Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition that involves the muscles, ligaments, and tendons. People may experience tiredness, problems with sleep, muscle pain, and tenderness when pressure is applied on certain parts of the body.
- Muscle pain often occurs in the neck, shoulder, chest, rib cage, lower back, and/or thighs. The pain may be located in only one area of the body or may involve the entire body. The pain varies from mild to severe and can limit daily activity. It is often described as a burning, gnawing, throbbing, stabbing, or aching feeling.
- Approximately 3 to 6 million Americans have FM. The chances of having FM are greater if you are female, have family members with FM, or have a history of rheumatic disease such as rheumatoid arthritis or lupus.

What causes fibromyalgia (FM)?

- The cause of FM is unknown. One theory suggests that people with FM have a lower threshold for pain because of increased sensitivity in the brain to pain signals. Others suggest that it may be due to not getting enough sleep, physical or emotional trauma, or some type of infection.

How is fibromyalgia (FM) treated?

- There is currently no cure for FM. Treating the symptoms may involve a combination of medication and non-medication therapies.
- Non-medication therapies may work to relieve the symptoms of FM.
 - Reduce stress. Schedule time for yourself each day to relax. Deep-breathing exercises or meditation can help reduce stress.
 - Get enough sleep. Allow yourself enough time for sleep. Establish a regular pattern for going to bed and waking up and practice good sleep habits.
 - Exercise regularly. At first, exercise can be difficult and may increase your pain. But regular exercise can help keep muscles toned and decrease pain and stiffness. “Start Low, Go Slow.” Begin with physical activity that fits your lifestyle. Appropriate exercises may include walking, swimming, and water aerobics. Stretching, good posture, and relaxation exercises can also be helpful.
- Different kinds of medicines used to treat depression, anxiety, muscle spasms, and pain may help with relieving the symptoms of FM.
 - Medicines for depression such as amitriptyline or nortriptyline affect the balance of certain brain chemicals called neurotransmitters in nerve cells. These medicines may help reduce tiredness, muscle pain, and improve sleep.
 - Pain relievers like tramadol (Ultram) and tramadol/acetaminophen may help reduce pain and stiffness.
 - Muscle relaxants such as cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril) may reduce pain and spasms and improve sleep.
 - Seizure medicines, such as gabapentin (Neurontin) and pregabalin (Lyrica) may help reduce pain.
- No one drug is able to treat all the symptoms or works for everyone. Your doctor can help find treatment options for you.

I've seen advertisements for the medicine called Lyrica? What is it? Does it work for FM?

- Pregabalin (Lyrica) is a newer medicine available to treat FM in adults.
- Researchers think that Lyrica, like other medicines, works on chemicals in the brain and thereby relieves symptoms.
- Lyrica is not on the Kaiser Permanente Formulary. Other medicines, rather than Lyrica, are usually used as first-line treatments for FM.

- There are only a few studies that have looked at whether Lyrica works for FM. In one study, those who took Lyrica reported having less pain and improvement in their FM symptoms compared to those who received placebo (sugar pills). Another study found that people taking Lyrica had longer pain relief compared to those who received sugar pills. Both studies were sponsored by the makers of Lyrica. There are no studies that have compared Lyrica directly to other medicines.
- More studies are needed to better assess the long term effects of using Lyrica and how it compares to other medicines used for the treatment of FM.

What about the drug Neurontin? Is it similar to Lyrica?

- Gabapentin (Neurontin) is a “cousin” of Lyrica and has been used to treat FM. It is thought to work on chemicals in the brain, like Lyrica.
- One study that looked at whether Neurontin works for people with FM found that those taking Neurontin reported having less pain, improved sleep, and improvement in their other FM symptoms compared to those who received sugar pills. Neurontin is available as a generic medicine called gabapentin. Generic medicines offer cost savings for members with a tiered drug benefit and provide a lower out-of-pocket expense for those without drug benefit coverage.

What are the side effects of Lyrica and Neurontin?

- Lyrica and Neurontin have similar side effects. The most common are dizziness, drowsiness, sleepiness, and blurry vision. Tremors, swelling of the legs and hands may also occur less commonly. Lyrica may cause dry mouth, weight gain, and increased appetite. Neurontin may cause muscle aches and mood swings.
- Taking alcohol or medicines that increase drowsiness or sleepiness in addition to Lyrica or Neurontin is not recommended.
- If you would like more information about other possible side effects, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

How can I find more information on fibromyalgia (FM)?

- Check the Health Encyclopedia on the Kaiser Permanente National Members website at <http://www.members.kp.org> for more information on FM.
- Other well known websites that have information on fibromyalgia include: webmd.com, health.nih.gov, rheumatology.org, fmaware.org, and mayoclinic.com.