

Use the New Zealand Formulary to access patient information leaflets

Patient information leaflets (PILs) are now available from the New Zealand Formulary (NZF). These provide patients with answers to questions such as:

What does the medicine do?

How should the medicine be taken?

What should be done if a dose is missed?

What are the relevant interactions and adverse effects?

Over the last few months approximately 80 PILs have been made available from the NZF. PILs are suitable for printing or viewing online with your patients.

The adverse effect section provides “Recommended action” advice for patients, depending on the type and severity of any adverse effect a patient may notice.

In addition, there is a section entitled “Other information” which covers any issues that the patient needs to be aware of when taking a medicine. This may include:

- Advising the prescriber if they have heart, liver or renal problems or if they may be pregnant or breastfeeding
- Whether to avoid alcohol or any particular foods when taking a medicine
- Whether their ability to operate a vehicle or machinery may be affected
- If any tests may be required prior to starting a medicine
- Whether the medicine can be safely stopped
- Whether the medicine may be addictive with ongoing use

If a PIL is available for a medicine, a link will be located at the bottom of the NZF drug monograph in the Patient Advice section. There is also an index of PILs which is accessible from the NZF homepage and is available from:

www.nzf.org.nz/nzf_70421

A number of PILs with specific advice for children have been available in the New Zealand Formulary for Children (NZFC) since the end of 2015, which are available from:

www.nzfchildren.org.nz/nzf_70291

The screenshot shows a Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) for Gabapentin. At the top, it features the NZF logo and the text 'New Zealand Formulary PATIENT INFORMATION'. The title 'GABAPENTIN' is in a blue box, followed by the brand names 'Arrow-Gabapentin®, Neurontin®, Nupentin®'. The text is organized into sections: 'What does it do?' (used for pain and seizures), 'How should you take it?' (regularly with water), 'What if you miss a dose?' (take as soon as possible), 'Can you take other medicines?' (some OTC medicines may interact), and 'What side effects might you notice?' (a table of side effects and actions). A final section 'Other information' lists additional precautions. At the bottom, there is a disclaimer: 'This leaflet contains important, but not all, information about this medicine. Prepared by the PILs Committee at Christchurch Hospital, Canterbury District Health Board, New Zealand. Jan 2015.'

Side Effects	Recommended action
Severe skin rash, skin peeling or blisters	Stop taking and see your doctor immediately
Suicidal thoughts Swelling of the face, lips, mouth, tongue or throat	Tell your doctor immediately
Changes in vision Feet, ankle or leg swelling Confusion, loss of coordination/walking or handwriting problems, memory loss, mood changes, tremor, trouble concentrating	Tell your doctor
Dizziness, drowsiness, headache Tiredness or weakness, muscle aches and pains Change of appetite, weight gain, dry mouth Impotence	Tell your doctor if troublesome
Stomach upset	Take with food

The PILs project is a collaboration between the Department of Clinical Pharmacology, University of Otago, and the Department of Pharmacology, Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB). PILs are written and reviewed by the PILs Committee which comprises a clinical pharmacology consultant and registrar, a drug information pharmacist, three clinical pharmacists and a lay member. The NZF editorial team also review and contribute to each PIL that is included in the NZF.