



Gabapentin for Cats

What is it?

- Gabapentin is a medication that is commonly used for pain in humans, dogs, and cats. At slightly higher doses, it also has anti-anxiety and sedative effects in cats and dogs.

How do I give it?

- Gabapentin comes in two different forms: a compounded liquid, or a capsule.
- Some cats prefer the powder (open capsule) mixed with a small amount of canned food
- You can try hiding the full capsule in a soft treat, small piece of chicken, fish, or something else tasty
- The liquid can be gently administered into your cats' mouth
- It is generally most effective when given with a "loading dose" 8-12 hours prior to the appointment, and repeated 2 hours prior

What are the effects?

- Peak effect is usually 2 hours after administration
- Drowsiness, mild sedation, wobbliness – keep your cat in a safe area where he/she cannot injure him/herself by falling
- The effects can vary widely from subtle to moderate and can last between 6-12 hours.
- All animals respond differently to medications. Ideally a trial run of the medication at home, prior to a veterinary visit would be best
- **Your cat will likely be drowsier at home, in a much lower stress environment, than they will be at the clinic, or in a higher-stress environment.**
- In rare instances a cat may experience the opposite effect: hyperactivity, agitation, or an increase in fear, anxiety, and stress. Please call us if you notice these signs.

Injectable Sedation

- For very fearful, reactive cats, or in situations where your pet may be painful or uncomfortable, we may need injectable sedation to facilitate a thorough exam and services.
- In most cases, we still recommend giving Gabapentin at home prior to your cat's visit, as it can allow our injections to work more effectively, often at lower doses.
- If you think your pet may need injectable sedation, withhold your cat's normal morning meal for a morning appointment. You can give a very small amount of food, or a treat to give the Gabapentin. Feed a light breakfast prior to an afternoon appointment.

Will my cat need this medication for every veterinary visit?

- Our goal is to have your cat arrive at the hospital as relaxed and comfortable as possible
- We use a multi-modal approach: pre-visit pharmaceuticals (PVPs) and calming pheromones (Feliway). Bringing a hungry cat helps them more readily accept our treats, or bring their favorite high-value treats, or toys from home.
- We hope that by reducing fear, anxiety, and stress, and with positive reinforcement (treats, toys, brushing, etc.) we can eventually try without medication. Many cats benefit greatly from PVPs at every visit, and that's okay.