

Adjuvant Medications for Pain

What Are They?

Adjuvant medications are drugs not originally designed as painkillers but proven to help in nerve pain and chronic pain conditions. They are often added alongside other treatments (like NSAIDs or injections) to improve relief and function.

Benefits

- Reduce nerve-related pain (neuropathic pain, fibromyalgia, sciatica).
- Improve sleep quality in chronic pain patients.
- Address mood disorders (depression, anxiety) that can worsen pain.
- Can lower the need for opioids and reduce reliance on them.

Possible Side Effects

- Gabapentinoids (Gabapentin, Lyrica): Drowsiness, dizziness, swelling in legs/feet, weight gain.
- Antidepressants (Cymbalta, Elavil): Dry mouth, constipation, sleepiness, nausea, blood pressure changes, sexual side effects.
- Risk of sedation, especially if combined with opioids or alcohol.
- May take several weeks before full benefit is noticed.

Examples of Adjuvant Pain Medications

- Gabapentin (Neurontin)
- Pregabalin (Lyrica)
- Duloxetine (Cymbalta)
- Amitriptyline (Elavil)
- Nortriptyline
- Venlafaxine (Effexor)

Key Point for Patients:

These medications are not habit-forming like opioids and may help control pain by working on the nervous system. They are most effective when taken regularly as prescribed, not 'as needed.'