

Pharmacological Management of Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) or Periodic Limb Movement Disorder (PLMD)

Note: Treatments noted in this pathway are **APC Amber 2 category** – initiation and minimum 3 months supply by the sleep centre and neurology team (specialising in RLS/PLMD). GPs are **not** expected to initiate these treatments but may be asked to take on prescribing in line with APC recommendations (patients will have individual management plans in place).

Diagnosis of RLS or PLMD

Screen all patients for underlying causative factors. Measure:

- Serum ferritin, vitamin B₁₂, folate, haemoglobin and thyroid function tests
- Initiate iron, vitamin B₁₂, folate supplementation or thyroid replacement therapy as indicated

First Line Therapies

Dopamine Agonists (DA)

- Ropinirole 0.25 - 4mg nocte or
- Pramipexole 0.088 – 0.54mg nocte

If augmentation occurs or predominant presence of daytime symptoms, (start alternative DA:

- Rotigotine (patch) 1 – 3mg nocte

Review by specialist in 3 months

If intolerant of DA, or has a history of insomnia or compulsive behaviours:

Alpha-2-delta ligands

- Gabapentin* 300 – 1200mg nocte (preferred agent) or
- Pregabalin* 25 – 300mg nocte (if intolerant to Gabapentin or significant drug interactions)

Review by specialist in 3 months

[Recommendation 060 Gabapentin-Pregabalin in RLS](#)

Improvement but residual symptoms:

- Continue first line therapy
- Add an additional first line agent i.e. Gabapentin or Pregabalin for painful/neuropathic RLS

Review by specialist in 3 months

If patient is receiving a DA, monitor for Impulse Control Disorders

Second Line Therapies

No significant improvement**, Stop first line therapy and initiate:

Benzodiazepines/BZRA

- Clonazepam* 0.25 – 4mg nocte
(data available is for the use of Clonazepam only)

For insomnia management in RLS

- Zolpidem* 5 – 10mg nocte or
- Zopiclone* 7.5 – 15mg nocte

Or, Management of pain associated with RLS:

Opioids: First line therapy

- Codeine* 30 – 90mg nocte or
- Tramadol* 50 -200mg nocte

Then consider:

- Oxycodone/Naloxone 5/2.5mg – 60/30mg BD (licensed use in RLS)

Review by specialist in 3 months

[Recommendation 061 Clonazepam/Zopiclone/Zolpidem in RLS](#)//[Recommendation 062 Opioids in RLS](#)

*Off label use

- **Defined as Significant change in Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS)
<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/NMCP2/PatientServices/SleepClinicLab/Documents/EPWORTH-SLEEPINESS-SCALE.pdf> or
- Restless Legs Syndrome Rating Scale (RLSRS) <http://www.medicine.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/booth/RLS/RLSratingscale.pdf>
<http://www.aasmnet.org/Resources/PracticeParameters/TreatmentRLS.pdf>
<https://www.guidelines.co.uk/rlsuk/restless-legs>

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