

Carbamazepine (Tegretol/Teril/Carbium)

Information for patients

What is it for?

This drug was first used to control epilepsy. Now it is also used (alone or with lithium) to control abnormal mood changes.

When will it work?

You should begin to feel some improvement in two to three weeks. It may take longer as the dosage needs to be carefully adjusted. Telling the doctor how you feel will help to find the right amount.

How and when do I take the tablets?

You may start on a low dose. This will be gradually increased to find the right amount. To reduce stomach upset, take the tablets with food (or just after food) and a glass of water.

What happens if I miss a dose?

If you forget a dose at the normal time, take it when you remember. If it is almost time for the next dose, then just take the normal dose. Do not take a double dose.

How long do I need to take it?

Your doctor will discuss the likely benefits of taking it and how long the treatment may last. Feeling well does not mean that you can stop taking the tablets. It means that the tablets are keeping you well. Carbamazepine is not addictive. Talk to your doctor before you stop taking the tablets.

Do I need blood tests?

It is important to have blood tests to check that your carbamazepine dose is at the right level. Carbamazepine will be less effective if it is at low levels in your blood. If it is too high, you could get carbamazepine toxicity.

What else should I tell my doctor?

- If you experience any mood changes.
- (For women) If you miss a period, think you may be pregnant or you intend getting pregnant.

What about side effects?

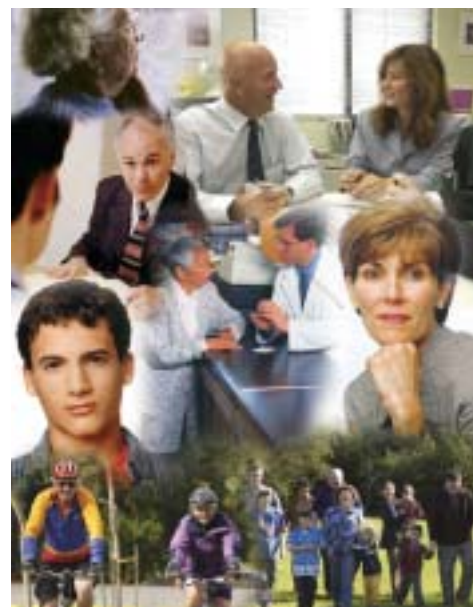
You may get side effects before you start to feel better. They can often be helped by adjusting the medication or by other methods.

Do not stop taking your medication abruptly, but talk to your doctor or pharmacist about any concerns you have.

If you experience any side effects, report them to your doctor.

Common side effects include:

- Drowsiness
- Dry mouth
- Blurred vision
- Nausea
- Mild dizziness
- Ringing in the ears
- Headache.



Uncommon side effects include:

- Skin rash, hives or itching
- Sore throat and flu-like symptoms
- Severe diarrhoea
- Unusual bruising or bleeding
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice).

Should you experience any of these uncommon side effects while taking carbamazepine, you need to contact your doctor urgently.

Toxicity

You may have toxicity if you start to experience:

- Severe nausea
- Vomiting
- Shaking
- Clumsiness
- Irritability, restlessness or agitation
- Confusion
- Changes in vision.

If you think you have toxicity, tell your doctor today.

What else should I be careful about?

- Driving a car or operating machinery – you may react slower.
- Alcohol, which may make you more dizzy or sleepier than usual.

Always tell any other doctor, pharmacist or dentist you may visit that you take this medicine. Some medicines can react with others, even those you may buy without a prescription.

Note to health professionals:

This leaflet should not replace verbal counselling. In particular, this leaflet is not a substitute for informed consent. This leaflet provides information for patients taking carbamazepine for affective disorders. It is not intended for patients with epilepsy. Reference to any drug or substance does not necessarily imply recommendation by the Victorian Department of Human Services for its use.

Published by the Metropolitan Health and Aged Care Services Division, Victorian Government Department of Human Services, Melbourne Victoria.