

Patient Name: _____ Date: _____
 Doctor Name: _____ Emergency Number: _____
 Pharmacy: _____ Number: _____

What is Carbamazepine?

Carbamazepine is the generic name for a commonly used seizure drug. Other names for this drug include Tegretol, Tegretol XR and Carbatrol. This medicine is used to control epileptic seizures. It is approved by the FDA for the treatment of partial seizures which include simple partial (auras), and complex partial seizures. It is also approved for generalized tonic-clonic seizures that start from a specific area of the brain. Carbamazepine has also been approved for the use of certain pain conditions such as trigeminal neuralgia (a specific type of nerve pain that affects the face).

Important questions to ask your doctor:

- Why am I being given this medicine? _____
- What amount should I be taking? _____

What does the drug look like and how should I take it?

Please note that generic formulations will look different as may forms from other countries. Shown below are common brand name versions of the drug.

Tegretol 100 and 200 mg



Carbatrol 200 mg and 300 mg



Frequently Asked Questions:

How do I take this medication? Take this medicine exactly as it is prescribed to you. Do not take the medicine in larger amounts or longer than recommended by your doctor. Do not change your dosage without your doctor's advice. Tell your doctor if the medicine does not seem to work in treating your condition.

The syrup (liquid) and the tablet should be taken two to four times a day with meals. The extended release tablets, known as Tegretol XR or Carbatrol, are usually taken twice a day with meals. Try to take your medications the same time and manner every day.

Is it best to take this medication with food? This medicine can be taken with or without food. Try to take it the same time each day since taking it with food may change the time it takes to be absorbed.

What should I do if I miss a dose? Take the missed dose as soon as possible; however, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take an extra dose unless prescribed by a doctor.

What side effects may occur? Side effects may occur with any medicine. Some will go away on their own when the dose of medicine is changed. Others may be more serious and mean that your body is not tolerating the drug. Tell your doctor about all side effects that occur, but do not stop taking the medication without advice from your doctor. Some common side effects include:

- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Drowsiness
- Vomiting
- Dry mouth

Potentially serious side effects are those involving a severe rash or allergic reaction. Since Tegretol may lower the ability of your body to fight infection, try to limit contact with people who have colds or infections. Remember to tell your doctor if you experience any side effects.

What if I experience side effects? Various side effects may occur in taking this medicine. Most side effects are not serious and may disappear naturally. Call your doctor if you have any questions concerning your possible side effects; however, do not stop taking your medication without advice from your doctor. They will discuss and recommend possible options. At times it is necessary to continue taking your medications despite these side effects.

There are other side effects that may be serious and indicate your body is not tolerating the drug properly. Call a doctor right away if these side effects become severe or cause considerable problems in your daily functions. Tegretol can lower the ability of your body to fight infection. Avoid contact with people who have colds or infections. Tell your doctor if you notice signs of infections like fever, sore throat, rash or chills as these may indicate potentially life threatening problems.

Contact your physician immediately if you experience any of the following side effects.

- Severe allergic reactions
- Tightness in the chest
- Difficulty breathing
- Black, tarry or bloody stools
- Calf pain
- Swelling
- Change in urine output
- Chest pain
- Confusion
- Fainting
- Irregular heart beat
- Fever
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Hallucinations
- Joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Red, swollen, blistered or peeling skin

- Severe or persistent dizziness, nausea or vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Suicidal thoughts or actions
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Ulcers or sores in the mouth
- Unusual bruising or bleeding
- Vision problems
- Yellowing of skin or eyes

How should I store the medication? Keep this medicine in its original container, tightly closed and out of reach of children. Store your prescription at room temperature, away from excess heat and moisture, (i.e. not in the bathroom). Protect the extended release capsules and liquid from light. Do not freeze the liquid. Throw away any medicines that are outdated or no longer needed. Talk to your pharmacist about the proper disposal of your medication.

How long will it take the medicine to work? It may take a number of weeks or months to find the right dose and then some time may be needed to know how well the medicine works to control your seizures. How long this takes will be different for each person. It may depend on how often you have seizures, what other medicines you may be taking and how your body responds to the drug.

Should I write down how the medicine is affecting me? It is important to write down how you feel while you are on medicine. Always keep track of changes and how medicine is prescribed, side effects and changes in seizures. Take the information to all follow-up visits with your healthcare providers.

Will this medicine affect other medicines that I am taking? Make sure that you tell all of your healthcare providers the names of all medicines, herbal or dietary supplements, vitamins and over-the-counter medicines you are taking. Some of these medicines may interfere with how carbamazepine works and lower or raise the amount in your system.

Some medicines that may interact with carbamazepine include oral contraceptives and other antiepileptic medications. Please see [AED] instruction sheets for list of other medicines that may interfere with carbamazepine.

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- Drowsiness
- Vomiting
- Dry mouth

Potentially serious side effects are those involving a severe rash or allergic reaction. Since Tegretol may lower the ability of your body to fight infection, try to limit contact with people who have colds or infections. Remember to tell your doctor if you notice signs of infections like fever, sore throat, rash or chills as these may indicate potentially serious problems.

What would an allergic reaction look like? This may be seen with symptoms such as hives or large red spots on the body, itching, difficulty breathing, or closing of the throat.

How can I manage my side effects?

- To help lessen upset stomach, take the medicine with a snack or meal.
- To help lessen dizziness, take the evening dose before bedtime.

Some side effects improve over time. If a side effect is difficult to manage or doesn't go away, talk to your doctor.

When should I contact my doctor? Call your doctor right away if any side effects are severe or cause problems in your ability to function or if you have any of the following problems while taking the medication:

- Double vision
- Dry mouth
- Dizziness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Do not stop the medicine without talking to your doctor first

Can this seizure medicine affect my bones? Some seizure medications may cause thinning of the bones. Carbamazepine has been shown to cause bone problems. All people taking this seizure medication should take calcium and vitamin D supplements every day. Regular exercise and a healthy diet are also important. People who have thinning of the bones may also need prescription medication to treat this. Talk to your doctor about how to check the health of your bones and what to do next.

Can I drink alcohol while on this medication? People taking this medicine should not drink alcohol because carbamazepine may increase the effects of alcohol.

May I drive while taking carbamazepine? Use caution with driving, operating machinery or performing other hazardous activity. This medicine may cause dizziness and drowsiness. If you have any of these problems or are having seizures, avoid these activities and talk to your doctor.

Just for Women:

Is this medicine safe to take during pregnancy? Carbamazepine has been shown to cause harm to the fetus. If you think you may be pregnant, contact your doctor. You need to discuss the benefits and risks of using carbamazepine while pregnant. Very little carbamazepine is found in breast milk. It is safe to breast feed while taking this medicine. There is an increased risk of a condition called spina bifida in children of women taking this medication. Women who are taking this medication who wish to become pregnant should discuss treatment options with their physicians before the pregnancy begins.

Will this affect my birth control pills? Hormonal birth control may not work as well while you are taking carbamazepine. To prevent pregnancy, you need to use an extra form of birth control. Carbamazepine may cause the results of some pregnancy tests to be wrong. Check with your doctor if you have questions or concerns about the pregnancy test results.

Other information:

Carbamazepine may reduce the number of clot-forming cells, also called platelets in your blood. Avoid activities that may cause bruising or injury. Tell your doctor if you have unusual bruising or bleeding. Tell your doctor if you have any dark, tarry or bloody stools. Carbamazepine may cause you to become sunburned more easily. Avoid the sun, sun lamps or tanning booth unless you know how you will react to carbamazepine. Use a sunscreen or wear protective clothing if you are outside for more than a short time.

More Questions?

For more detailed information about Carbamazepine, Carbatrol and Tegretol and seizures, please visit www.epilepsy.com and click on Treatment >> Seizure Medicines (www.epilepsy.com/epilepsy/seizure_medicines.html)