

# CARBAMAZEPINE

Other names: Tegretol®, Tegretol CR®



**Important note:** The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

## Why you are taking this medicine

Carbamazepine is mainly used to prevent epilepsy. However, it has many other uses such as:

- to treat nerve pain (e.g. diabetic neuropathy or trigeminal neuralgia)
- in psychiatry to limit mood swings
- for diabetes insipidus

## When to take this medicine

Carbamazepine should be taken regularly. The CR (controlled release) tablets are taken twice a day. The plain release tablets are taken two to three times a day.

Make sure carbamazepine is taken after food. This will reduce any stomach upset.

Your dose of carbamazepine may be slowly increased to achieve the full effect of the medicine. This may take a number of weeks. Blood tests may be needed to help get to the desired dose. On the day of your blood test, do not take your carbamazepine until after your blood test is done.

**DO NOT STOP** taking carbamazepine suddenly as a gradual reduction of the dose may be required. Discuss with your doctor about stopping or changing your dose of carbamazepine.

Carbamazepine controlled release tablets may be halved, but do not crush or chew them.

## If you miss a dose

Take your dose as soon as possible except when it is close to the time for your next dose. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular dosing schedule. You should not take two doses at the same time.

## Side Effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Call your doctor **immediately** if you have any of these side effects:

- skin rash/peeling
- fever
- sore throat
- mouth ulcers
- abnormal bruising/bleeding

- difficulty breathing
- yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes
- dark urine

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you have these side effects:

- blurred vision
- upset stomach (e.g. nausea, vomiting)
- rash
- dry mouth
- drowsiness, dizziness
- headache
- feeling tired

This medicine may cause you to feel drowsy or tired the next morning. If this continues, contact your doctor. Also, if drowsy do not drive or operate machinery or work at jobs that require you to be fully alert.

Carbamazepine can cause skin sensitivity to sunlight. Make sure that when you are in the sun you are well protected (e.g. wear a hat and use sunscreen with SPF 30+).

This list of side effects is **not** complete. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any side effect is of a concern to you.

## **Other Medicines**

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicine including herbal or complementary products and medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Taking carbamazepine with alcohol can increase the effect of drowsiness. Alcohol is best avoided while taking this medicine.

Other medicines can interfere with carbamazepine, such as:

- oral contraceptives (birth control pills)
- antibiotics (e.g. erythromycin)
- antidepressants (e.g. fluoxetine)
- antifungals (e.g. fluconazole)
- cardiac medicine (e.g. diltiazem)
- other anti-epileptics medicines
- warfarin

This is not a complete list and it is important to check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medication.

It is best to avoid grapefruit and its juice and they can interact with carbamazepine.

## **Storage**

Keep all medicines out of reach of children.

**Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist.**