

Carbamazepine

Why is this medication prescribed?

Carbamazepine is used to prevent and control seizures. This medication is known as an anticonvulsant or anti-epileptic drug. It is also used to relieve one type of nerve pain (trigeminal neuralgia). This medication works by reducing excessive nerve signals in the brain and restoring the normal balance of nerve activity.

How should this medicine be used?

Take this medication by mouth with meals or as directed by your doctor. Dosage is based on your medical condition and response to therapy. Your doctor may gradually increase your dose. Follow these directions carefully.

Take this medication regularly at evenly spaced intervals in order to get the most benefit from it. Remember to use it at the same times each day to keep the amount of medicine in your body at a constant level.

Do not take more of this medicine than prescribed or stop taking it without consulting your doctor. Some conditions (e.g., seizures) may become worse when the drug is suddenly stopped. Your dose may need to be gradually decreased.

Other uses for this medicine

This drug may also be used to treat certain mental/mood conditions (e.g., bipolar disorder, schizophrenia) and other types of nerve pain..

What special precautions should I follow?

Before taking carbamazepine, tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are allergic to it; or to other anti-seizure medications (e.g., phenobarbital, phenytoin) or tricyclic antidepressants (e.g., amitriptyline, desipramine); or if you have any other allergies.

This medication should not be used if you have certain medical conditions. Before using this medicine, consult your doctor or pharmacist if you have- decreased bone marrow function (bone marrow depression), a certain blood disorder (acute intermittent porphyria).

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist your medical history, especially of: high blood pressure, blood clots, blood vessel disease, heart disease (e.g., coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, heart rhythm or conduction disorders), kidney disease, liver disease, glaucoma, mental/mood disorders, certain types of seizures

(atypical absence seizures), history of decreased bone marrow function due to other drugs.

This drug may make you dizzy or drowsy; use caution engaging in activities requiring alertness such as driving or using machinery. Limit alcoholic beverages.

This medication may make you more sensitive to the sun. Avoid prolonged sun exposure, tanning booths or sunlamps. Use a sunscreen and wear protective clothing when outdoors.

During pregnancy, this medication should be used only when clearly needed. It may harm an unborn baby. Discuss the benefits and risks of using this medication during pregnancy with your doctor. Since untreated seizures is a serious condition, do not stop taking this medication unless directed by your doctor. If you are planning pregnancy, become pregnant, or think you may be pregnant, immediately consult your doctor. If you are pregnant, prenatal care that includes tests for defects is recommended.

This medication passes into breast milk but is unlikely to harm a nursing infant. Consult your doctor before breast-feeding.

What special dietary instructions should I follow?

Avoid eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice while being treated with this medication unless your doctor instructs you otherwise. Grapefruit juice can increase the amount of certain medications in your bloodstream. Consult your doctor or pharmacist for more details.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

If you miss a dose, use it as soon as you remember. If it is near the time of the next dose, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not double the dose to catch up.

What side effects can this medication cause?

Get emergency medical help if you have any of these signs of an allergic reaction: hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Call your doctor at once if you have any of these serious side effects:

- fever, sore throat, and headache with a severe blistering, peeling, and red skin rash
- pale skin, easy bruising or bleeding, unusual weakness;
- white patches or sores inside your mouth or on your lips;
- feeling short of breath, even with mild exertion;
- swelling of your ankles or feet;

- nausea, stomach pain, loss of appetite, jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes); or
- urinating less than usual.

Less serious side effects may include:

- feeling dizzy, drowsy, or unsteady;
- mild nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, stomach pain;
- confusion, headache, blurred vision;
- feeling agitated or depressed;
- ringing in your ears;
- dry mouth, swollen tongue; or
- joint or muscle pain, leg cramps.

What storage conditions are needed for this medicine?

Store at room temperature below 30 degrees C away from light and moisture

In case of emergency/overdose

If overdose is suspected, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

What other information should I know?

You should not take this medicine if you have a history of bone marrow suppression, or if you are allergic to an antidepressant such as amitriptyline , desipramine , imipramine , or nortriptyline .

Do not take carbamazepine if you have taken an MAO inhibitor such as isocarboxazid , tranylcypromine , phenelzine , or selegiline in the past 14 days.

FDA pregnancy category D. Do not use carbamazepine without telling your doctor if you are pregnant. It could harm the unborn baby.

Carbamazepine can make birth control pills less effective. Ask your doctor about using a non-hormone method of birth control (such as a condom, diaphragm, spermicide) to prevent pregnancy while taking carbamazepine.

Do not stop using carbamazepine without first talking to your doctor, even if you feel better. You may have increased seizures or unpleasant side effects if you stop using carbamazepine suddenly. You will need to use less and less before you stop the medication completely.

Patients of Asian ancestry may have a higher risk of developing a rare but serious skin reaction to carbamazepine. Your doctor may recommend a blood test before you start the medication to determine your risk of this skin reaction.

Carbamazepine can cause side effects that may impair your thinking or reactions. Be careful if you drive or do anything that requires you to be awake and alert.

Avoid drinking alcohol, which can increase some of the side effects of carbamazepine. It may also increase the risk of seizures.

Cold or allergy medicine, narcotic pain medicine, sleeping pills, muscle relaxers, other seizure medicines, and medicine for depression or anxiety can add to sleepiness caused by carbamazepine. Tell your doctor if you regularly use any of these other medicines.



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