

carbamazepine (oral)

Pronunciation: kar ba MAH zeh peen
Brand: Carbatrol, Eptol, Tegretol, Tegretol XR

What is the most important information I should know about carbamazepine?



Rarely, carbamazepine may cause serious blood problems. Notify your doctor immediately if you develop any of the following symptoms, which may be early signs of potential blood problems: fever, sore throat, rash, sores in the mouth, easy bruising, or red or purple bruising.



Do not stop taking carbamazepine even if you feel better. It is important to continue taking carbamazepine to prevent seizures from recurring.



Use caution when driving, operating machinery, or performing other hazardous activities. Carbamazepine may cause dizziness or drowsiness. If you experience dizziness or drowsiness, avoid these activities.



Do not drink alcohol while taking carbamazepine. Alcohol may increase drowsiness caused by carbamazepine. It may also increase the risk of seizures.



Carbamazepine may decrease the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use a second method of birth control while taking carbamazepine to ensure protection from unintended pregnancy.

What is carbamazepine?

Carbamazepine is a drug that affects the nerves and brain. It works by decreasing impulses in nerves that cause seizures and pain.

Carbamazepine is used to treat seizures and nerve pain such as trigeminal neuralgia and diabetic neuropathy.

Carbamazepine may also be used for purposes other than those listed in this medication guide.

What should I discuss with my healthcare provider before taking carbamazepine?



Do not take carbamazepine without first talking to your doctor if you

- have ever had an allergic reaction to a tricyclic antidepressant such as amitriptyline (Elavil), clomipramine (Anafranil), doxepin (Sinequan), desipramine (Norpramin), amoxapine (Asendin), imipramine (Tofranil), or nortriptyline (Pamelor);
- have taken a monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitor such as isocarboxazid (Marplan), tranylcypromine (Parnate), or phenelzine (Nardil) in the past 14 days; or
- have a bone marrow disease or a history of bone marrow suppression.

• Before taking carbamazepine, tell your doctor if you have:

- kidney disease;
- liver disease;
- heart disease;
- a low level of red blood cells in your body (anemia); or
- glaucoma.

You may not be able to take carbamazepine, or you may require a dosage adjustment or special monitoring during treatment if you have any of the conditions listed above.



Carbamazepine is in the FDA category D. This means that carbamazepine is known to be harmful to an unborn baby. **Do not** take this medication without first talking to your doctor if you are pregnant.



Carbamazepine passes into breast milk and may harm a nursing infant. **Do not** take this medication without first talking to your doctor if you are breast-feeding a baby.

How should I take carbamazepine?

Take carbamazepine exactly as directed by your doctor. If you do not understand these instructions, ask your pharmacist, nurse, or doctor to explain them to you.



Take each dose with a full glass of water.

The Tegretol, Tegretol XR, and Eptol brands of carbamazepine should be taken with food. The Carbatrol brand of carbamazepine may be taken with or without food.



Do not crush, break, or chew any extended-release (Tegretol XR) formulations of carbamazepine. Swallow them whole. They are specially formulated to release slowly in the body.

If swallowing of the Carbatrol capsules is difficult, they may be opened and the contents sprinkled onto a teaspoon of soft food such as applesauce or another similar food. Swallow the entire contents of the teaspoon, making sure not to chew or crush the small beads. Consume the mixture immediately, do not save it for later use. Drink an 8 ounce glass of water after swallowing the mixture.

The tablet coating of the Tegretol XR formulation is not absorbed in the body and may be found in the stool.



Shake the suspension form of carbamazepine well before measuring a dose. To ensure that you get a correct dose, measure the suspension with a special dose-measuring spoon or cup, not with a regular table spoon. If you

do not have a dose-measuring device, ask your pharmacist where you can get one.



Do not mix the Tegretol suspension with other liquid medicines or take it at the same time as other liquid medicines unless otherwise directed by your doctor. Doing so may cause the formation of a precipitate (solid matter).

Your doctor may want you to have blood tests during treatment with carbamazepine. It is important for your doctor to know how much carbamazepine is in your blood and how well your liver is working.

Carry or wear a medical identification tag to let others know that you are taking this medicine in the case of an emergency.



Do not stop taking carbamazepine even if you feel better. It is important to continue taking carbamazepine to prevent your seizures from recurring.

Grapefruit and grapefruit juice may interact with carbamazepine. The interaction could lead to potentially adverse effects. You should discuss the use of grapefruit and grapefruit juice with your doctor. Do not increase or decrease the amount of grapefruit products in your diet without first talking to your doctor.



Store carbamazepine at room temperature away from moisture and heat.

What happens if I miss a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and take only the next regularly scheduled dose. **Do not** take a double dose of this medication.

What happens if I overdose?



- Seek emergency medical treatment.

Symptoms of a carbamazepine overdose include irregular or decreased breathing, muscle twitches, restlessness, seizures, tremors, slurred speech, staggering walk, dizziness, large pupils, back-and-forth motion of the eyes, nausea, vomiting, and decreased urine production.

What should I avoid while taking carbamazepine?



Use caution when driving, operating machinery, or performing other hazardous activities. Carbamazepine may cause dizziness or drowsiness. If you experience dizziness or drowsiness, avoid these activities.



Do not drink alcohol while taking carbamazepine. Alcohol may increase drowsiness caused by carbamazepine. It may also increase the risk of seizures.



Avoid prolonged exposure to sunlight. Carbamazepine may increase the sensitivity of your skin to sunlight. Use a sun screen and wear protective clothing when exposure to the sun is unavoidable.

Grapefruit and grapefruit juice may interact with carbamazepine. The interaction could lead to potentially adverse effects. You should discuss the use of grapefruit and grapefruit juice with your doctor. Do not increase or decrease the amount of grapefruit products in your diet without first talking to your doctor.

What are the possible side effects of carbamazepine?

If you experience any of the following serious side effects, contact your doctor immediately or seek emergency medical attention:

- an allergic reaction (difficulty breathing; closing of your throat; swelling of your lips, tongue, or face; or hives);
- liver damage (yellowing of the skin or eyes, nausea, abdominal pain or discomfort, severe fatigue);
- chest pain, high blood pressure (headache, flushing), or congestive heart failure (shortness of breath, swelling of ankles);
- numbness or tingling in the hands, feet, arms, or legs;
- body or muscle jerks;
- confusion, slurred speech, or fainting;

- continuing headache, hallucinations, or depression;
- severe nausea or vomiting;
- back-and-forth movements of the eyes;
- blurred or double vision; or
- decreased urination.



Rarely, carbamazepine may cause serious blood problems. Notify your doctor immediately if you develop any of the following symptoms, which may be early signs of potential blood problems: fever, sore throat, rash, sores in the mouth, easy bruising, or red or purple bruising.

Other, less serious side effects may be more likely to occur. Continue to take carbamazepine and talk to your doctor if you experience

- mild nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, or decreased appetite;
- dry mouth;
- impotence; or
- joint or muscle aches or pains.

Side effects other than those listed here may also occur. Talk to your doctor about any side effect that seems unusual or that is especially bothersome.

What other drugs will affect carbamazepine?



Carbamazepine may decrease the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use a second method of birth control while taking carbamazepine to ensure protection from unintended pregnancy.

Carbamazepine can interact with many other medicines and many medications may affect your condition. Do not take any other prescription or over-the-counter medicines or herbal products without first talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

Where can I get more information?

Your pharmacist has additional information about carbamazepine written for health professionals that you may read.

Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use this medication only for the indication prescribed.

The information in this leaflet is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions, or adverse effects. If you have questions about the drugs you are taking, check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

© Multum Information Services 2001. Version: 5.03. Revision date: 7/31/02.