

Carbamazepine (pronounced car-bam-a-zee-pean)



What is carbamazepine?

Carbamazepine (also known as Tegretol[®] and Tegretol Retard[®]) is made as tablets, slow-release tablets, chewable tablets, a liquid, and suppositories.

What does carbamazepine help?

Carbamazepine is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of bipolar mood disorder (mainly mania) and epilepsy. It is sometimes also used to help the symptoms of trigeminal neuralgia (a painful condition of the face), alcohol withdrawal and other conditions.

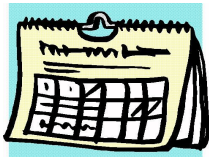


How and when should I take carbamazepine?

Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat. Do not chew the plain or slow release ("Retard") tablets. For the liquid, use a medicine spoon or oral syringe. Take your carbamazepine as directed on the medicine label. Try to take it at regular times each day. The slow release tablets can be taken once or twice a day. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember as there is no problem about taking carbamazepine with or after food. If the label says to take it once a day this is usually best at bedtime as it may make you drowsy at first.

How long will I have to wait before it works?

This will depend on what you are taking it for but the effect usually starts in a week or so, and builds over several weeks.

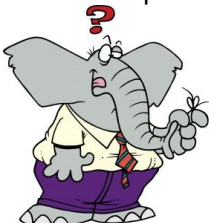


How long will I need to keep taking carbamazepine for?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. It may be for several months or years.

Can I stop taking carbamazepine suddenly?

It is better not to do this without talking it over first with other people e.g. relatives or your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Things normally work out much better if you stop medication in a planned way. Your symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some days, weeks or even months after carbamazepine has been stopped. When the time comes, you should withdraw carbamazepine by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks.



What should I do if I forget to take a dose of carbamazepine?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 4-6 hours of your next dose. If you remember after this just take the next dose as normal. Do not try to catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects.


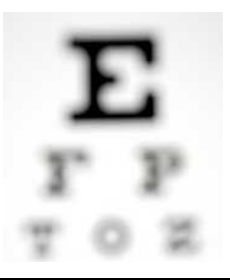








Can I cycle or drive while I am taking carbamazepine?

You may feel a bit light-headed at first when taking carbamazepine. Until this wears off, or you know how carbamazepine affects you, be careful cycling and, if you are old enough, do not drive or operate machinery.



What sort of side-effects might I get with carbamazepine?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from carbamazepine, and what you can do about them. The more common ones are near the top of the list.

	<p>Sleepiness. Feeling sleepy or sluggish. This can last for a few hours or longer after taking a dose. Don't drive, cycle or use machinery. It should wear off after a while. If not, ask your doctor about this.</p>		<p>Blurred vision or seeing double. Things look fuzzy and you can't focus your eyes properly. Don't cycle or drive. Ask your doctor if you can take your carbamazepine at a different time of the day or have the slow release tablets.</p>
	<p>Dizziness Feeling light-headed and faint. Don't stand up too quickly. Try to lie down or sit down if you feel it coming on. Don't drive or cycle.</p>		<p>Nausea and vomiting Feeling sick and being sick. Take your carbamazepine with or after food. This tends to wear off after a few days or a week or so. If you are sick for longer, contact your doctor.</p>
	<p>Headache If your head is painful, paracetamol usually helps.</p>		<p>Confusion Your mind is all mixed up. Your dose may be too high. Contact your doctor now.</p>
	<p>Bruising or bleeding easily, cough, sore nose and sore throat This can be a sign of something more serious. Stop taking carbamazepine and see your doctor straight away for a blood test.</p>		<p>Ataxia This is where you feel unsteady on your feet. Your dose may be too high. Talk to your doctor or nurse about this as soon as you can.</p>
	<p>Skin rash This can be a rash or itching seen anywhere on the skin. If this happens, stop taking your carbamazepine and contact your doctor now.</p>		<p>"SIADH" This is where you do not pass much urine, are tired and you can get a headache or feel confused, this can be dangerous contact your doctor now.</p>

Do not be worried by this list of side effects. Some people get no side effects at all and others may get some effects that are not listed in this table. If you think you might have a side effect to your medicine, you should ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you want to know more, go to our website for links to other websites with more information.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. You should also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions e.g. driving, women's health, how it works, doses and interactions, and about the conditions. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.