PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Carbamazepine

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Carbatrol; Epitol [DSC]; Equetro; TEGretol; TEGretol-XR

Brand Names: Canada

APO-CarBAMazepine CR; DOM-CarBAMazepine [DSC]; MINT-Carbamazepine; PMS-CarBAMazepine CR [DSC]; PMS-CarBAMazepine [DSC]; SANDOZ CarBAMazepine CR; TARO-CarBAMazepine; TEGretol; TEGretol CR; TEVA-Carbamazepine

Warning

- Blood cell problems have happened, like aplastic anemia and a type of low white blood cell count. Tell your doctor right away if you feel very tired or weak or have a fever, chills, shortness of breath, any unexplained bruising or bleeding, or purple “splotches” on your skin.
- Call your doctor right away if you have any signs of infection like fever, chills, flu-like signs, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or a wound that will not heal.
- Severe skin reactions have happened with this drug. These have included Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS), toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN), and other severe skin reactions. Sometimes these have been deadly. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin; other skin irritation (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- Call your doctor right away if you have round or oval red or dark patches on the skin. These spots may appear in the same place on your body as when you took this drug in the past.
- People with a certain gene (HLA-B*1502) have a higher chance of severe and sometimes deadly skin reactions with this drug. This gene is more common in Asian people, including South Asian Indian people. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- People with a certain gene (HLA-A*3101) may have a higher chance of severe allergic reactions with this drug. Allergic reactions can be deadly. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat seizures.
- It is used to treat pain caused by a problem with a nerve in the face.
- It is used to treat bipolar disorder.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have kidney disease.
- If you have had any of these health problems: Bone marrow problems or porphyria.
- If you are not able to break down fructose, talk with the doctor. Some of these products have sorbitol.
- If you take any drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) that must not be taken with this drug, like certain drugs that are used for hepatitis C, HIV, infections, and others. There are many drugs that must not be taken with this drug.
- If you have taken certain drugs for depression or Parkinson's disease in the last 14 days. This includes isocarboxazid, phenelzine, tranylcypromine, selegiline, or rasagiline. Very high blood pressure may happen.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

All products:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.
- Have your blood work, eye exams, and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- This drug may cause the results of some pregnancy tests to be wrong. Talk with the doctor.
- Talk with your doctor before you use alcohol, marijuana or other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs that may slow your actions.
- If you drink grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit often, talk with your doctor.
- Do not stop taking this drug all of a sudden without calling your doctor. You may have a greater risk of seizures. If you need to stop this drug, you will want to slowly stop it as ordered by your doctor.
- If seizures are different or worse after starting this drug, talk with the doctor.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may affect being able to father a child. Talk with the doctor.
- Birth control pills and other hormone-based birth control may not work as well to prevent pregnancy. Use some other kind of birth control also like a condom when taking this drug.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.

- Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about any risks to your baby.

Oral suspension:

- Some of these drugs have propylene glycol. Too much propylene glycol may lead to very bad health problems like nervous system problems, kidney problems, or other organ problems. If you have questions, talk with the doctor. Tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney problems, or if you take other drugs or products with propylene glycol.
- Some of these drugs have propylene glycol. Children younger than 5 years old have a higher chance of severe side effects from propylene glycol. This drug must be used with extra care in these children, especially in premature and full-term newborns for some time after birth. Talk with the doctor.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of low sodium levels like headache, trouble focusing, memory problems, feeling confused, weakness, seizures, or change in balance.
- Change in speech.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Change in eyesight.
- Trouble walking.
- A severe and sometimes deadly effect has happened in people taking drugs

for seizures like this drug. Call your doctor right away if you have swollen glands; fever; rash; painful sores in the mouth or around the eyes; chest pain; signs of kidney problems like unable to pass urine or change in the amount of urine passed; or signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.

- Like other drugs that may be used for seizures, this drug may rarely raise the risk of suicidal thoughts or actions. The risk may be higher in people who have had suicidal thoughts or actions in the past. Call the doctor right away about any new or worse signs like depression; feeling nervous, restless, or grouchy; panic attacks; or other changes in mood or behavior. Call the doctor right away if any suicidal thoughts or actions occur.
- A very bad and sometimes deadly health problem called neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS) may happen. Call your doctor right away if you have any fever, muscle cramps or stiffness, dizziness, very bad headache, confusion, change in thinking, fast heartbeat, heartbeat that does not feel normal, or are sweating a lot.
- Heart problems like heart failure and abnormal heartbeats have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these heart problems have been deadly. Call your doctor right away if you have a fast, slow, or abnormal heartbeat; severe dizziness or passing out; or shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- Rarely, a severe reaction called angioedema has happened with this drug. This reaction can be deadly. Signs may include swelling of the hands, face, lips, eyes, tongue, or throat; trouble breathing; trouble swallowing; or unusual hoarseness. Get medical help right away if you have any of these signs.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.

- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Dry mouth.
- Constipation.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

Extended-release capsules:

- Take with or without food.
- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.
- You may sprinkle contents of capsule on applesauce or other soft food. Do not chew. Swallow right away and follow with water or juice.

All other oral products:

- Take with food.

Chewable tablets:

- Chew well before swallowing.

Suspension:

- Shake well before use.
- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with

this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

- Do not mix with any other liquid drugs.
- Do not take this drug at the same time as any other liquid drugs.

Extended-release tablets:

- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.
- Do not take chipped or broken tablets.
- You may see the tablet shell in your stool. This is normal and not a cause for concern.
- If you have trouble swallowing this drug whole, talk with your doctor. There may be other ways to take this drug.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2026-08-11

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Carbamazepine - Last updated on December 12, 2022
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