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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Carbamazepine

This information from Lexicomp® 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; Equetro; TEGretol; TEGretol-XR

## Brand Names: Canada

Mazepine; Tegretol

## Warning

- Unsafe blood cell count problems have happened with this drug. This includes a type of anemia called aplastic anemia and a type of low white blood cell count. Report any fever or chills, shortness of breath, feeling very tired or weak, any unexplained bruising or bleeding, or purple “splotches” on your child’s skin to the doctor right away.
- Call your child’s doctor right away if your child has 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.
- A very bad skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause very bad health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if your child has signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- The chance of very bad and sometimes deadly skin reactions is raised in people who have a certain gene called HLA-B\*1502. This gene type is most common in Asian people. The doctor may check blood work before starting this drug. 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 problems.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

## What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

### All products:

- If your child has an allergy to this drug or any part of this drug.
- If your child is allergic to any drugs like this one or any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If your child has kidney disease.
- If your child has had any of these health problems: Bone marrow disease or porphyria.
- If your child takes 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, or infections. There are many drugs that must not be taken with this drug.
- If your child has taken certain drugs used for low mood (depression) like isocarboxazid, phenelzine, or tranylcypromine or drugs used for certain other health problems in the last 14 days. Taking this drug within 14 days of those drugs can cause very bad high blood pressure.

### If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is breast-feeding a baby or plans to breast-feed a baby.

### Liquid (suspension):

- If your child is not able to break down fructose.

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

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

## **What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?**

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- Get your child an eye exam as you have been told by the doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- Alcohol may interact with this drug. Be sure your child does not drink alcohol.
- Talk with your child's doctor before giving your child other drugs and natural products that may slow your child's actions.
- If your child drinks grapefruit juice or eats grapefruit often, talk with your child's doctor.
- Have your child avoid tasks or actions that call for alertness until you see how this drug affects your child. These are things like riding a bike, playing sports, or using items such as scissors, lawnmowers, electric scooters, toy cars, or motorized vehicles.
- A very bad and sometimes deadly reaction has happened with this drug. Most of the time, this reaction has signs like fever, rash, or swollen glands with problems in body organs like the liver, kidney, blood, heart, muscles and joints, or lungs. Talk with the doctor.

## **If your child is or may be sexually active:**

- This drug may cause the results of some pregnancy tests to be wrong. Talk with the doctor.
- Birth control pills and other hormone-based birth control may not work as well to prevent pregnancy. Be sure your child uses some other kind of birth control also, like a condom, when taking this drug.

## **If your child is pregnant:**

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy. If your child is pregnant or gets pregnant while taking this drug, call the doctor right away.

## **What are some side effects that I need to call my child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has 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 liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of low sodium levels like headache, trouble focusing, memory problems, feeling confused, weakness, seizures, or change in balance.
- Signs of a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of kidney problems like unable to pass urine, change in how much urine is passed, blood in the urine, or a big weight gain.
- If your child's seizures are worse or not the same after starting this drug.

- Change in speech.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Not able to control eye movements.
- Slow heartbeat.
- Change in eyesight.
- Swelling, warmth, numbness, change of color, or pain in a leg or arm.
- Swollen gland.
- Very bad muscle or joint pain.
- Trouble controlling body movements.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Patients who take this drug may be at a greater risk of having thoughts or actions of suicide. The risk may be greater in people who have had these thoughts or actions in the past. Call the doctor right away if signs like low mood (depression), nervousness, restlessness, grouchiness, panic attacks, or changes in mood or actions are new or worse. Call the doctor right away if any thoughts or actions of suicide occur.
- A very bad and sometimes deadly health problem called neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS) may happen. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has any fever, muscle cramps or stiffness, dizziness, very bad headache, confusion, change in thinking, fast heartbeat, heartbeat that does not feel normal, or is sweating a lot.
- Heart problems like heart failure and certain very bad abnormal heartbeats have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these heart problems have been deadly. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a fast or abnormal heartbeat; very bad dizziness or passing out; or shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- A very bad reaction called angioedema has happened with this drug. Sometimes, this may be life-threatening. 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 your child has 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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Dry mouth.
- Dizziness.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Constipation.
- Feeling tired or weak.

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

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

## How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

### **Extended-release capsules:**

- Give this drug with or without food.
- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew, break, or crush.
- You may sprinkle contents of capsule on applesauce or other soft food. Have your child swallow right away without chewing and follow with water or juice.

### **All other oral products:**

- Give this drug with food.

### **Chewable tablet:**

- Have your child chew well before swallowing.

### **Extended-release tablets:**

- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew, break, or crush.
- Do not give your child chipped or broken tablets.
- You may see the tablet shell in your child's stool. This is normal and not a cause for concern.

### **Liquid (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 give this drug to your child at the same time as any other liquid drugs.

### **Injection:**

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.

### **All products:**

- To gain the most benefit, do not miss giving your child doses.
- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.
- Do not stop giving this drug to your child all of a sudden without calling the doctor. Your child may have a greater risk of seizures. If your child needs to stop this drug, you will want to slowly stop it as told by the doctor.

## **What do I do if my child misses a dose?**

### **All oral products:**

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.

- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

### **Injection:**

- Call your child's doctor to find out what to do.

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

### **All oral products:**

- Store at room temperature.
- Protect from light.
- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

### **Injection:**

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your child's doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

### **All products:**

- 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 child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Keep a list of all your child's drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your child's doctor.

- Talk with your child's doctor before giving your child any new drug, including prescription or OTC, natural products, or vitamins.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's doctor, nurse, 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 information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

## **Last Reviewed Date**

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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