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 the doctor right away if your child feels very tired or weak or has a fever, chills, shortness of breath, any unexplained bruising or bleeding, or purple “splotches” on the skin.
- 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.
- 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 your child has signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin; other skin irritation (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- Call your child’s doctor right away if your child has round or oval red or dark patches on the skin. These spots may appear in the same place on the body as when your child 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 your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

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

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has kidney disease.
- If your child has had any of these health problems: Bone marrow problems or porphyria.
- If your child is not able to break down fructose, talk with the doctor. Some of these products have sorbitol.
- 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, infections, and others. There are many drugs that must not be taken with this drug.
- If your child has taken certain drugs for depression or certain other health problems in the last 14 days. This includes isocarboxazid, phenelzine, or tranylcypromine. Very high blood pressure may happen.

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 to give this drug with all of your child's other 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?

All products:

- 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 your child's blood work, eye exams, and other lab tests checked 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 your child uses marijuana, other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs 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.
- 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.
- If seizures are different or worse after starting this drug, talk with the doctor.
- This drug may affect being able to father a child. 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 or breast-feeding a baby:

- 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.
- Tell the doctor if your child is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about any risks to the 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 the doctor if your child has liver or kidney problems, or 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 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 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 the doctor right away if your child has swollen glands; fever; rash; painful sores in the mouth or around the eyes; chest pain; signs of kidney problems like not able to pass urine or change in how much urine is 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 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 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, 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 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:

- 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 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 tablets:

- 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.
- If your child has trouble swallowing this drug whole, talk with the doctor. There may be other ways to give this drug.

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.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- 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.

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 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.
- 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 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

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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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