

# Carbamazepine

(Kar – ba – maz – e – peen)

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## How this medication is used

Carbamazepine has other names but one of the most common is Tegretol<sup>®</sup>. It is used to treat chronic pain, especially certain types of nerve pain that feels sharp and burning (neuropathic pain). It is particularly used for trigeminal neuralgia or tic douloureux (severe stabbing pain usually on one side of the face). It is also used to treat seizures and to improve or balance mood.

## Reminders

- Tell your doctor about all medical conditions, especially if you have kidney, liver, heart or eye problems.
- Talk to your health care provider if you may be pregnant or are planning to get pregnant.
- It can interact with many other medications. Check with your doctor or pharmacist each time you start taking a new medication.
- You should have regular blood tests to check your liver and blood levels of this medication before starting and while taking it.

## How to take this medication

- Take this medication exactly as directed by your doctor. It must be taken regularly, even if you feel well. Do not stop taking it without first checking with your doctor. When it is time to stop taking this medication, your doctor may slowly decrease the amount you take.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and take at your regular time. Do not take 2 doses at one time.
- Long acting tablets: Swallow whole with food. Do not crush, chew or suck tablets.
- Short acting tablets: Available in tablets that can be swallowed whole or crushed, also available in chewable tablets, and liquid.
- Take it with a meal or right after a meal with a full glass of water or other fluid.
- Grapefruit can affect the way this medication works. If you eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice, limit the amount you have. You may eat 1 grapefruit or drink 125 mL (4 ounces) 1 to 2 times a week.

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### **While taking this medication you may notice**

- **A dry mouth.** Suck on ice chips, sugar-free candy or chew sugar-free gum. Good care of your teeth is very important at this time.
- **Dizziness.** Get up slowly when you have been sitting or lying down. If you feel dizzy, sit or lie down until you are no longer dizzy, then get up slowly.
- **Drowsiness.** Until you know how it affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.
- **Increased effects of alcohol.** Making you more sleepy, dizzy and lightheaded. Do not drink alcohol (wine, beer and liquor) while on this medication.
- **Sensitivity to sunlight.** Avoid direct sunlight. Cover up, wear sunscreen, hat and sunglasses as needed.
- **Nausea or upset stomach.** Take with food.

### **Contact your doctor or seek medication attention if you notice**

- blurred or double vision
- a change in coordination
- confusion
- skin rash
- mood changes unusual for you
- signs of infection such as sore throat, fever, chills
- signs of bleeding such as easy bruising, nosebleeds, black or bloody stools
- dark urine
- you have seizures
- slurred speech
- problems passing urine
- you feel tired or drowsy all the time
- yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes