



Official reprint from UpToDate®

www.uptodate.com ©2018 UpToDate, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All Rights Reserved.

Wolters Kluwer

The content on the UpToDate website is not intended nor recommended as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your own physician or other qualified health care professional regarding any medical questions or conditions. The use of UpToDate content is governed by the [UpToDate Terms of Use](#). ©2018 UpToDate, Inc. All rights reserved.

Carbamazepine: Patient drug information

Copyright 1978-2018 Lexicomp, Inc. All rights reserved.

(For additional information [see "Carbamazepine: Drug information"](#) and [see "Carbamazepine: Pediatric drug information"](#))

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 skin to your doctor right away.
- 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.
- 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 you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your 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 you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

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

All products:

- If you have an allergy to carbamazepine or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to any drugs like this one, any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If you have had any of these health problems: Bone marrow disease or porphyria.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Boceprevir, delavirdine, efavirenz, etravirine, nefazodone, nevirapine, rilpivirine, or another drug that has carbamazepine in it.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Apixaban, dabigatran, edoxaban, or rivaroxaban.
- If you have taken certain drugs used for low mood (depression) like isocarboxazid, phenelzine, or tranylcypromine or drugs used for Parkinson's disease like selegiline or rasagiline in the last 14 days. Taking this drug within 14 days of those drugs can cause very bad high blood pressure.
- If you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.

Liquid (suspension):

- If you are not able to break down fructose.

Injection:

- If you have kidney disease.

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?

- 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 blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- Have an eye exam 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 drink alcohol or use other drugs and natural products that slow your actions.
- If you drink grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit often, talk with your doctor.
- Do not switch brands or types of this drug (like tablets, liquid) unless you talk with the doctor. They may not work the same.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 doctor right away if you have 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 you have any of these signs.
- This drug may affect how much of some other drugs are in your body. If you are taking other drugs, talk with your doctor. You may need to have your blood work checked more closely while taking this drug with your other drugs.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- 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.

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 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 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.
- 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.

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:

- Dizziness.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Dry mouth.
- 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 doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best taken?

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

Long-acting 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 tablet:

- 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.

Long-acting 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.

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 doses.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.
- 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.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

All oral products:

- 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.

Injection:

- Call your 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 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 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.
- Keep a list of all your drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your doctor.
- Talk with the doctor before starting 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 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.

Use of UpToDate is subject to the [Subscription and License Agreement](#).

Topic 11711 Version 157.0