

CARBAMAZEPINE (MR)



Other names
Carbagen, Tegretol

Drug category
Sodium channel blocker

Uses

Carbamazepine is used for epilepsy, facial pain, bipolar disorder and neuropathic (nerve-related) pain.

Available forms

Modified release tablet (this should be used for epilepsy), tablet, liquid, and suppository (convert to 1.25 x oral dose for short-term use). If switching rapidly from oxcarbazepine, the conversion is in a 3:2 ratio.

Some potential side-effects (inform your doctor if you think you have a serious side-effect)

Nausea, abdominal pain, unsteadiness, low blood sodium level, weakness, drowsiness

Rare: Liver disease, severe blistering rash, reduced immunity

May worsen absence and myoclonic seizures

Not to be used if: Han Chinese/Thai origin (unless HLA-B*1502 allele negative)
Irregular heart rhythm
Porphyria, Previous bone marrow suppression

Contraception, pregnancy and breastfeeding

Carbamazepine makes hormone-based contraception less likely to work and an alternative method should be used after medical advice. Should avoid in pregnancy as increased risk of birth defects (5-7%). It is thought to be safe during breastfeeding.

Interactions with other drugs

Many interactions including effects on warfarin, new anticoagulants and other anti-epileptic drugs

Monitoring

Consider blood tests for full blood count, sodium, kidney and liver function. Drug level can be checked too for toxicity. Consider vitamin D level.

How to use it

Day	Morning dose	Evening dose	(Other drugs)
Start date	Nil	200mg	
2 weeks later	200mg	200mg	
4 weeks later	200mg	400mg	
6 weeks later	400mg	400mg	
After 6 weeks	Continue same dose	Continue same dose	

If 400mg twice daily does not help and you have no side-effects, then it can be increased to a higher dose, and this can be done by adding 200mg every 2 weeks but the maximum dose should be no more than 1600mg in a day (800mg twice a day). If reducing it, do this in steps of 200mg every week until stopped.

Do not switch between brands or between modified-release and regular carbamazepine tablets.

Stop and seek medical attention if fever, bruising, bleeding or a rash occur on using the drug.

This information is for guidance only. Always read the medicine information leaflet with any new medicine for full details.