

Parent and Carer's Information Leaflet

# Carbamazepine

**(Also called Tegretol or Tegretol Retard)**

**For further advice:**

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## Carbamazepine

### (also called Tegretol or Tegretol Retard)

Carbamazepine is a medicine used in epilepsy to control all focal seizures (fits) and generalised tonic-clonic seizures. It is also used to treat pain, e.g. neuralgia, headaches and some psychiatric symptoms.

Carbamazepine is available in

- A liquid (caramel-flavoured) 100mg per teaspoon (5ml).
- Tablets (100, 200 or 400mg tablets)
- Chew-tablets (100 or 200mg tablets, which can be chewed **or** swallowed whole)
- A slow-release tablet called Tegretol Retard (200 or 400mg tablets). There are also other brands available.

### How do I use it?

- Carbamazepine (either liquid or tablet) is usually taken twice or three times a day
- The slow release tablets may be taken once or twice a day.
- If your child takes the liquid form you should use either a measuring teaspoon or oral syringe to make sure that your child gets exactly the right amount.
- If a dose is forgotten and you remember up to four hours after missing the dose, give the forgotten dose when you can.
- If you remember only at or near the time the next dose is due, just give your child the usual dose. **Do not** give any extra Carbamazepine.
- If your child vomits within 15 minutes of taking a dose give the dose again; if your child vomits after 15 minutes after taking the dose, **do not** give it again.

The medicine is at the correct dosage when your child is free of seizures or convulsions (fits) and has no side effects. It is occasionally helpful to measure the level of carbamazepine in the blood, e.g. if a high dose is not working.

If your child has been taking the medicine regularly, **do not stop it suddenly** as this may bring on a fit or convulsion.

Keep a seizure diary if you can and remember to always bring all the medicines with you to clinic appointments.

### Use with other medicines?

Most other medicines such as Paracetamol (Calpol) and antibiotics can be used with Carbamazepine. However **Theophylline** (Slo-Phyllin, Nuelin, Uniphylline, Franol), which is a medicine used in asthma and **Erythromycin** (Erythroped, Erythrocyin), which is an antibiotic, should not usually be taken with Carbamazepine. If an antibiotic is needed there are others, which can be used. Caution should be taken with Cimetidine, Warfarin, Acetazolamide, Steroids and Rifampicin as Carbamazepine may reduce the effectiveness of these drugs or the drugs may increase the effects of the Carbamazepine.

Carbamazepine may reduce the effect of the oral contraceptive pill; this should be discussed with your doctor

**Be sure that a doctor prescribing your child any other medicine knows that your child is taking Carbamazepine.**

### What are the common side-effects?

Carbamazepine does seem to be a well-tolerated anticonvulsant medicine. Side effects tend to occur at the start of treatment.

1. Drowsiness, unsteadiness, dizziness, blurring of vision or double vision and vomiting may occur during the first week of treatment. If these symptoms do not go away after the first two weeks of treatment, the dosage of the medicine may be too high. The medicine is usually started with a very low dose to prevent these symptoms.
2. An allergic reaction consisting of a blotchy red skin rash, which may be associated with fever, may occur, usually within a

month of starting the Carbamazepine. If the rash does appear tell your doctor or nurse (GP or hospital) **immediately**. Other rashes can also occur

3. Very rarely Carbamazepine has been associated with bone marrow problems. This may then cause low numbers of white blood cells with severe infections, or decreased numbers of platelets (which cause the blood to clot) causing bruising or bleeding. This is potentially a very serious side effect. If these symptoms occur contact your doctor **immediately**. Routine blood tests are not needed if there are no symptoms.
4. Carbamazepine can make some epilepsies worse, e.g. in children with some types, "idiopathic generalised epilepsy" e.g. juvenile myoclonic epilepsy or childhood or juvenile epilepsy absence epilepsy. If you are concerned about this discuss it with your doctor.

Despite the long list of possible side effects, Carbamazepine is a very effective drug in treating epilepsy and the vast majority of children taking this medicine do not develop any problems or side effects.

For further information please refer to the manufacturer's information leaflet.