

Information for Patients about  
**Carbamazepine**



Carbamazepine is a medicine which is used to treat epilepsy and also for certain types of pain (neuropathic pain). You are on this medicine to treat your pain.

**Dosage:** Take Carbamazepine as directed. The dosage may change as you usually start with a low dose and we slowly increase this to find the best dose for you. (Please see the section on increasing the dose).

## **Administration**

- It may take 2 - 4 weeks before you feel pain relief. It may take longer to get to the right dose for you and to allow the medicine to build up in your body.
- Your GP will need to check your blood results occasionally to make sure you have the right amount of Carbamazepine in your blood.

If you are female and plan to have children, you must tell your GP before starting this medicine. This medicine may cause birth defects in babies if taken during pregnancy. Women of child-bearing age must use appropriate contraception. NB. Carbamazepine may affect oral contraception. If you use oral contraception or plan to start it, please check with your GP that you are on a correct dose before you start Carbamazepine.

## **Possible Side Effects**

The commonest side effects are:

- Drowsiness. This may occur as you increase your dose. If drowsiness occurs, you should not drive or operate machinery, until the drowsiness stops. You must tell the DVLA if you are on medicines which affect your driving.

- The combination of Carbamazepine with alcohol can cause significant drowsiness. We advise you not to drink when you first take this medication, and whilst increasing the dose. Once you are on a stable dose, you may drink alcohol if the drowsiness has stopped.
- Dry mouth. Sucking sugar free fruit sweets or chewing gum may help this.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Blurred vision.
- Dizziness.



These effects are often mild and may go away during treatment. If they are severe or last for more than a few days then you should get advice from your GP, Community Pharmacist or NHS 24 on **08454 24 24 24**.

**Stop this medicine immediately if you have a skin reaction, high temperature, yellowing of your skin, swollen ankles, feet or lower legs, joint or stomach pain, difficulty breathing, and speak to your GP as soon as possible.**

If you experience any other unusual symptoms whilst taking your medication you should get advice from your GP, Community Pharmacist or NHS 24.

## **Increasing the Dose**

The dosage regimen below is a guide on how to increase your medicine. You may increase it more slowly if you feel you are getting side effects, or you can stay at a lower dose if you are getting good pain relief (you don't have to keep increasing the dose if you do not need to). However do not increase your dose faster than the recommended increase on next page.

<b>Day</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	<b>Night</b>
<b>1</b>	100mg	No medicine	No medicine	100mg
<b>4</b>	100mg	No medicine	100mg	100mg
<b>8</b>	100mg	100mg	100mg	100mg
<b>12</b>	100mg	100mg	100mg	200mg
<b>16</b>	100mg	100mg	200mg	200mg
<b>20</b>	100mg	200mg	200mg	200mg
<b>24</b>	200mg	200mg	200mg	200mg

If you experience any side effects whilst increasing your Carbamazepine please reduce the dose back to the previous dosage.

## Stopping

If your GP, Community Pharmacist or NHS 24 decide that you should stop taking Carbamazepine, please reduce your dosage gradually over 1 to 2 weeks. Do not suddenly stop taking your medicine, unless advised to do so. Below is an example of how to reduce the dose. You should always contact your GP for directions.

**For example - if you are on 200mg four times a day**

	<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	<b>Night</b>
<b>Day 1-3</b>	No medicine	200mg	200mg	200mg
<b>Day 4-6</b>	No medicine	No medicine	200mg	200mg
<b>Day 7-10</b>	No medicine	No medicine	No medicine	200mg
<b>Day 11</b>	Stop			

Some people can stop this medicine suddenly and have no problems. However some people may get withdrawal symptoms if it is stopped suddenly such as insomnia, headache, flu syndrome, anxiety etc which should only last a few days. These symptoms are more likely to occur if people have been on this medicine for more than a few months.



## **Remember!**

- Don't run out of medicine.
- Ask for a repeat prescription before your medicine is finished.
- If you have any questions about this medicine please contact your GP or community pharmacist.

**This leaflet is a summary of some information. However, you should still always read the manufacturers information which comes with your medication.**





