

What is Tegretol® (Carbamazepine)?

Tegretol® is an anti-epileptic drug that has been used to treat patients with epilepsy since 1974. It is helpful in the treatment of Partial Seizures and Generalized Tonic-Clonic Seizures

Starting the Medicine:

We usually gradually increase the dose, until your body gets adjusted to the medication. Since each patient is unique in that he/she breaks down the medication differently or may need a higher or lower dosage to control their seizures, there is no standard dose that is appropriate for all patients.

What is the dosage of the pill and what does it look like?

100 mg, light pink, red speckled, round tablet

200 mg, pink, oval tablet

Liquid: 100 mg per 5ml

What Side Effects Can Be Caused by Tegretol®?

Side Effects can be dose related (common) or Idiosyncratic (rare):

Common Dose-Related Side Effects:

Double vision, nausea, drowsiness, dizziness and unsteadiness when walking may occur. These side effects are most frequent at the start of treatment, and they are temporary and usually go away as your body gets adjusted to the medicine.

If you have these side effects, your doctor may:

- spread out the dose evenly throughout the day in four divided doses

- decrease the daily dose, and increase the bedtime dose
- instruct you to take your pill with food since this will slow the rate at which the medicine gets into the blood, but will not affect the total amount that is absorbed.

Rare Side Effects:

Tegretol® can reduce the body's ability to manufacture certain blood cells which are important to fight infections and prevent bleeding. A reduction in these cells can cause fever, sore throat and ulcers in the mouth, or unusual bleeding and easy bruising. If these symptoms occur, contact your doctor immediately.

Tegretol® may rarely cause a liver disorder. Symptoms may include jaundice (yellow skin), rash, itching, poor appetite and fatigue. If these symptoms occur, contact your doctor immediately.

Skin Rash:

An allergic rash can occur with Tegretol®. It tends to occur during the first six weeks of therapy. If this occurs, contact your doctor immediately.

Pregnancy:

Women of child-bearing age should be aware that there is a small increase in risk for congenital malformations (fetal damage about 4-6% risk overall and a 0.5% risk of spina bifida). This risk increases in women taking more than one anti-epileptic drug. Discuss this with your doctor.

How Do I Take My Medications?

It is very important to take your medication regularly since a stable blood level helps to reduce seizures. Therefore, the medication does not work when taken

on a as needed basis. It is usually prescribed in three or four (preferably) evenly divided doses taken at regular times.

Can I Take Tegretol® with Other Medications?

Yes, Tegretol® may be taken with most medications. However, Erythromycin, Darvon, Wygesic, Prozac, Tagamet, Isoniazid and Calcium Channel Blockers such as (Calan, Procardia and Cardizem) will increase the Tegretol level and increase side effects. Always tell your doctor what other medicines you are taking.

What Should I Do If I Miss a Dose?

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. You may have to change your usual times taking Tegretol® when you are trying to make up the missing dose. If you have to “double up” on a dose, take that dose at bedtime.

Why is My Blood Checked for Tegretol®?

The blood sample is a more accurate way to measure Tegretol® in your body than counting the number of tablets that you take. This level is important in adjusting your daily Tegretol® dose.

It is preferred to have the Tegretol® level checked in the morning before you take your first dose so that your doctor can see what your level is at its lowest point in the day.

Why is My Blood Checked for a CBC with Differential and SGOT?

Although Tegretol® rarely causes problems with blood cells or liver problems, we periodically like to check the CBC to count the number of white and red blood cells and platelets. We check the SGOT and SGPT which are indirect tests of liver function.

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