

CARBAMAZEPINE

DRUG NAME

Generic name: Carbamazepine

Class of drug: Antiepileptic

Brand names (Australia): Avloire, Tegretol

DOSAGE FORM

Available as a 100 mg or 200 mg immediate release tablet. Quantity 100.

Also available as a 200 mg or 400 mg controlled release tablet. Quantity 200.

Also available as a 20 mg/mL oral liquid. Quantity 300 mL.

HOW IT WORKS

Carbamazepine is an anti-epileptic medicine. It stabilises overactive nerve cells by blocking sodium channels. This reduces abnormal firing of nerves that causes sudden, sharp, or shooting pain.

Used for nerve pain, especially trigeminal neuralgia and sometimes diabetic neuropathy. Also used for epilepsy and mood stabilisation.

Onset of action

- Pain relief may begin within a few days.
- Full benefit usually seen after 1–2 weeks of regular dosing.

DOSAGE & FREQUENCY

Your doctor will advise on the starting dose and guide the dose changes.

- start with _____
- if tolerated, increase to _____ after _____ days
- if necessary, increase by _____ every _____ week(s)
- if successive increases are well tolerated *and bring additional benefit*, continue to titrate up to a maximum of _____
- to be reviewed by your doctor on _____

Always follow your doctor's instructions — dosing is highly individual.

ROUTE OF ADMINISTRATION

Oral (by mouth) unless otherwise specified.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW WHILE TAKING THIS MEDICATION

- Take with food to help prevent stomach upset. Swallow controlled release tablets whole; do not chew or crush them.

- This medicine may cause drowsiness, dizziness or blurred vision especially at the start of treatment or when the dose is increased; if affected, do not drive or operate machinery.
- Carbamazepine may also increase the effects of alcohol.
- This medicine interacts with grapefruit juice and many other drugs; avoid grapefruit juice and tell your doctor and pharmacist that you are taking carbamazepine before starting any new medication including herbal and over-the-counter products.
- Tell your doctor immediately if rash, sore throat, fever, mouth ulcers, bruising or bleeding occur.
- Do not stop taking this medicine suddenly unless your doctor tells you to – risk of withdrawal seizures or pain relapse.

STORAGE INSTRUCTIONS

Store below 25°C in original packaging. Keep away from moisture and heat. Keep out of reach of children.

DISPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

Return unused or expired medication to your pharmacy for safe disposal.

MISSED DOSE INSTRUCTIONS

Ask your doctor or pharmacist.

EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS

Seek urgent medical help if you:

- Take too much (overdose may cause unsteadiness, blurred vision, drowsiness, seizures, irregular heartbeat).
- Develop skin rash, fever, or sore throat (may indicate serious reaction).
- Have signs of liver problems (yellowing skin/eyes, dark urine).

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Drowsiness, dizziness
- Unsteadiness, poor coordination
- Blurred or double vision
- Nausea, vomiting
- Constipation
- Headache

SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS (REQUIRE IMMEDIATE MEDICAL REVIEW)

- Severe rash or blistering skin (Stevens–Johnson syndrome, rare but serious)
- Unusual bleeding or bruising (possible blood problems)
- Severe mood changes or suicidal thoughts
- Liver problems (jaundice, abdominal pain)
- Severe allergic reaction (swelling, difficulty breathing)

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SIDE EFFECTS

- Drowsiness/unsteadiness: Take at night initially; avoid driving until stable.
- Nausea: Take with food.
- Constipation: Increase fluids, fibre, and gentle activity.
- Blurred vision: Usually improves with dose adjustment — speak to your doctor if persistent.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Interactions:

- Interacts with many medicines (antidepressants, warfarin, some antibiotics, contraceptives).

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- Reduces the effectiveness of the oral contraceptive pill — speak to your doctor.
- Avoid alcohol (increases drowsiness and liver risk).

Precautions:

- Requires regular blood tests (to monitor blood count and liver function).
- Use with caution in liver or kidney disease.
- Not usually recommended in pregnancy (risk of birth defects) — discuss alternatives with your doctor.

Elective surgery advice

- Usually continued before surgery.
- Inform your anaesthetist — carbamazepine may interact with anaesthetic drugs and alter their metabolism.
- Blood levels may be checked if you are unwell or on high doses.
- Do not stop suddenly before surgery.

TITRATION DIARY

Date	Dose Taken	Side Effects	Notes (e.g., sleep, pain relief)