

Carbamazepine for Headache and Facial Pain

Carbamazepine is a medication used to reduce pain of certain headache and facial pain conditions. It is licensed for the management of the pain of trigeminal neuralgia. It helps calm overactive pain nerves.

Before Starting Carbamazepine:

Your prescriber will consider several factors before prescribing carbamazepine to make sure it's safe and suitable for you.

Please tell your prescriber if you have:

- Bone marrow problems
- A blood disorder
- Epilepsy
- Mental health conditions
- Glaucoma
- Heart, liver, or kidney problems

Also tell your prescriber all the medications and supplements you take, including anything you have bought over-the-counter or online, as carbamazepine interacts with many different medications.

How Do I Take Carbamazepine?

You will usually start on a low dose of carbamazepine, which will be gradually increased. This helps your body adjust and reduces the chance of side-effects.

The schedule below is a guide, but your prescriber may change it to suit your individual needs. Your prescriber will advise you on your starting dose.

	Morning	Midday	Evening
For 7 days take:	100mg		100mg
For 7 days take:	100mg	200mg	100mg
For 7 days take:	200mg	200mg	200mg
For 7 days take:	300mg	200mg	300mg
For 7 days take:	400mg	300mg	300mg
Thereafter take:	400mg	400mg	400mg

Your prescriber may advise you to increase carbamazepine more quickly depending on your response.

This leaflet reflects a consensus of current clinical practice as agreed by the British Association for the Study of Headache (BASH) Council. It is intended to provide information to support clinical decision-making and does not constitute prescriptive guidance that must be followed in all cases. Clinicians should continue to exercise their own professional judgement and tailor management to the individual. The content reflects the collective experience of headache specialists across the UK, whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged, and recognises the ongoing evolution of best practice. This leaflet should be read in conjunction with the Summary of Product Characteristics and the patient information leaflet provided with all medication.

How Long Should I Try It?

- You should continue to increase carbamazepine as per the regime above until your pain or headache attacks resolve or you are unable to tolerate the side-effects
- If you experience mild side-effects these will likely improve the longer you take the medication
- If you experience side-effects that are difficult to manage, contact your prescriber to discuss your dose
- Your prescriber or GP will review your treatment regularly
- Do not stop taking this medicine suddenly, as your symptoms may return or worsen and you may feel unwell. Speak to your prescriber about how to reduce the dose safely
- If it is working well, your prescriber may advise gradually reducing the dose, typically after about 12 months

Do I Need Blood Tests?

Your prescriber or GP will arrange a routine blood test to check your kidney function and blood count while you are increasing the carbamazepine and then less frequently once you are on a stable dose.

What Are the Possible Side-Effects?

Some people get side-effects. These usually get better as your body gets used to the medication.

This is not a full list of side-effects. Please read the information leaflet that comes with your medication for more details.

The most common side-effects are:

- Feeling sick (nausea) or vomiting
- Feeling weak, tired, or dizzy
- Headache
- Double vision
- Weight gain
- Dry mouth

If you feel tired or dizzy, do not drive, ride a bike, or use tools or machinery

Carbamazepine can very rarely cause serious skin reactions that require urgent hospital treatment. You should contact urgent care (NHS 111) or your GP if any of the following symptoms occur:

- A widespread red or purple rash
- Blisters or skin peeling
- Sores in your mouth, eyes, or genital area
- Flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, or cough

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If you experience side-effects or it is ineffective your prescriber may advise you to switch to oxcarbazepine.

Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

Carbamazepine is not safe in pregnancy or breastfeeding

- Do not take it if you are pregnant or trying for a baby
- Speak to your GP for advice about safe contraception and pregnancy planning
- Always tell your prescriber if you think you might be pregnant

For more information, see: Best Use of Medicine in Pregnancy (BUMPS)

<https://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/>

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