

# Carbamazepine (Tegretol®)

ALAMEDA COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Client's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Initial Medication Instructions \_\_\_\_\_

## What does this medication help to treat?

- Bipolar disorder or other conditions
- Mood swings or fluctuations in mood
- Agitation, aggression, or hostility
- Poor concentration, rapid thoughts
- Excessive behavior (e.g. spending, gambling, sex)
- Irritability

- Depressive symptoms
  - Fatigue or insomnia
  - Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
  - Social withdrawal
  - Decreased energy or activity
  - Overwhelming feelings of sadness

Carbamazepine is sometimes prescribed for other uses; ask your prescriber for more information.

## Blood Level Monitoring

- An advantage of carbamazepine is that your prescriber can check blood levels to find the right dose to work the best with the least risk of unwanted side effects.
- Your blood level should be: **4-12 mcg/ml** (sometimes lower or higher levels are needed as determined by your prescriber).

## Other Information

- You should start to notice some benefits of this medication within 1 to 2 weeks after initiation of therapy.
- If you have not experienced benefit after one month of treatment at the prescribed dose, contact your prescriber.
- **Caution:** if you are female and taking birth control pills, your birth control may not work as well while on carbamazepine. You may need to speak with your prescriber on ways to prevent pregnancy.
- This medication has been shown to cause birth defects in women taking it during the first 3 months of pregnancy. Discuss the benefits vs. risks of carbamazepine therapy with your prescriber if you are pregnant or have plans to become pregnant.

## Side Effects and Management

### Common (greater than 10 in 100 clients on this medication)

Nausea and Vomiting	Try taking your medication with food, if vomiting continues, call your prescriber.
Diarrhea	Talk to your prescriber about possibly adjusting the dose of your medication.
Rash	Rash can be mild or severe, contact prescriber immediately.
Drowsiness	Use caution when driving or operating machinery. Ask your prescriber about taking dose at night.
Dizziness and Unsteadiness	Arise slowly from a sitting or lying position. Dangle feet off the side of the bed before getting up.
Constipation	Drink more fluids and increase intake of high fiber foods (fruit, vegetables).
Weight gain	Avoid foods high in fat and sugar. Eat balanced meals and maintain an active lifestyle.

### Uncommon (~1 to 10 in 100 clients on this medication)

Blurred vision	Let your prescriber know if this side effect occurs. Your dose may need to be lowered.
Headache	You may take aspirin or acetaminophen if you experience a headache.

### Rare (less than 1 in 100 clients on this medication)

Call your prescriber immediately if you experience any of the following:	
▪ Severe rash that spreads over body, is red and causes skin to peel.	
▪ Decrease in white blood cells, in rare cases may lead to an increase in infection.	
▪ Abnormally low levels of sodium in the blood.	
▪ Pancreatitis (severe abdominal pain or enlargement, nausea, vomiting, fever, jaundice, low blood pressure, pain radiating to back).	
**References: Clinical Pharmacology, LexiComp 2011**	

NOTE: This information is not intended to cover all possible uses, precautions, interactions, or adverse effects for this medication. If you have further questions about the medications you are taking, check with your healthcare professional.