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PSYCHIATRY

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PATIENT EDUCATION

Oxcarbazepine

Trileptal / Oxtellar XR / Generic formulations

A guide for adults taking oxcarbazepine.
Follow the directions on your prescription and your provider's recommendations.

CHECK YOUR TABLET TYPE | KEEP YOUR SODIUM BLOOD TESTS

Formulations: Immediate-release tablets or suspension and extended-release Oxtellar XR have different schedules and food instructions.

What it is used for

Oxcarbazepine treats focal seizures. It is sometimes used off-label for mood symptoms, but evidence for bipolar treatment is limited. Confirm the specific target and how benefit will be assessed.

How it works

Its active metabolite affects sodium channels, reducing repetitive nerve firing. Seizure benefit does not establish equal benefit for every mood condition.

What to expect over time

The dose is often increased gradually to balance benefit and side effects. Track the condition being treated and report changes after each adjustment.

Taking your medication

- Immediate-release treatment is commonly twice daily, with or without food. Shake suspension and measure with the supplied device.
- Oxtellar XR is taken once daily on an empty stomach, at least one hour before or two hours after food. Swallow whole.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose. Then skip it. Do not double a dose.
- Consult with your provider before stopping or switching formulations.

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Side effects and safety

Possible side effects

- Dizziness, drowsiness, or fatigue
- Double vision or poor coordination
- Nausea or headache

Keeping track of treatment

Some side effects resolve with time; others may require a change of medication. Discuss persistent or bothersome side effects with your provider.

Report changes in mood, behavior, concentration, or suicidal thoughts. Antiseizure medicines carry a warning about suicidal thoughts and behavior.

Keep follow-up appointments. Your provider may adjust treatment based on symptoms, kidney or liver function, other medicines, and any recommended laboratory tests.

Have sodium and kidney function checked as directed. Low sodium can develop after months or years as well as early in treatment.

If you take too much

For a suspected overdose, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** immediately, even if you feel well. Call 911 for a seizure, collapse, trouble breathing, or inability to wake.

Before you start

Discuss kidney or liver disease, previous medication rashes, depression, and the reason for treatment.

Discuss pregnancy, pregnancy plans, and breastfeeding with your provider. Treatment decisions should consider both the medication and the condition being treated.

Discuss any reaction to carbamazepine or eslicarbazepine. Genetic testing may be considered for some ancestries, but a negative test cannot eliminate serious-rash risk.

Medicines and interactions

Review all your medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Have new medications checked before taking them.

Some hormonal contraceptives become less effective; arrange an appropriate alternative or backup.

Diuretics and some antidepressants can add low-sodium risk. Other antiseizure medicines and CYP-metabolized drugs can require adjustments.

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Living with your treatment

When to get help

Emergency symptoms. Get emergency care for a severe allergic reaction, a blistering rash, or a seizure that is prolonged or repeated.

Prompt medical advice. Seek immediate advice for a new rash. Blisters, peeling, mouth sores, or fever require urgent assessment. Report headache with weakness, vomiting, confusion, or worsening seizures because sodium may be low.

If you feel unsafe or have thoughts of self-harm, call 911 or go to an emergency department.

Your questions answered

Can I stop if I feel well?
Consult with your provider before stopping. Abrupt withdrawal can cause seizures or a return of the condition being treated.

Does use for seizures mean I have epilepsy?
Not necessarily. Some antiseizure medicines have other approved or off-label uses. Confirm the specific goal of your prescription.

Everyday tips

Use reminders and arrange refills before you run out.

Avoid driving until you know how treatment affects you; seizure-related driving restrictions may also apply.

Storage and safety

Keep medication in its labeled container, away from excess heat and moisture and out of reach of children and pets. Do not share it. Ask a pharmacy about disposal of unused medication.

Sources

Official prescribing information: oxcarbazepine
Official prescribing information: oxcarbazepine

Educational handout; does not replace your prescription or provider's recommendations.