

Medication Information for Parents and Teachers

Oxcarbazepine—Trileptal, Oxtellar XR

General Information About Medication

Each child and adolescent is different. No one has exactly the same combination of medical and psychological problems. It is a good idea to talk with the doctor or nurse about the reasons a medicine is being used. It is very important to keep all appointments and to be in touch by telephone if you have concerns. It is important to communicate with the doctor, nurse, or therapist. An *advanced practice nurse* (APN) has additional education and training after becoming a registered nurse (RN). Your child's medication may be prescribed by a medical doctor (MD or DO) or an APN. In addition, a *physician assistant* (PA) working with a physician may prescribe certain medications. In this information sheet, "doctor" includes medical doctors as well as APNs and PAs who prescribe medication. Often a nurse (RN) will be part of the team and answer questions and give information.

It is very important that the medicine be taken exactly as the doctor instructs. However, once in a while, everyone forgets to give a medicine on time. It is a good idea to ask the doctor or nurse what to do if this happens. Do not stop or change a medicine without asking the doctor or nurse first.

If the medicine seems to stop working, it may be because it is not being taken regularly. The youth may be "cheeking" or hiding the medicine or forgetting to take it (especially at school). The doses may be too far apart or a different dose or medicine may be needed. Something at school, at home, or in the neighborhood may be upsetting the youth, or he or she may need special help for learning disabilities or tutoring. Please discuss your concerns with the doctor. **Do not just increase the dose.** It is also very important not to decrease the dose or stop the medicine without talking to the doctor first. The problem being treated may come back, or there could be uncomfortable or even dangerous results.

All medicines should be kept in a safe place, out of the reach of children, and should be supervised by an adult. If someone takes too much of a medicine, call the doctor, the poison control center, or a hospital emergency room.

Each medicine has a "generic" or chemical name. Just like laundry detergents or paper towels, some medicines are sold by more than one company under different brand names. The same medicine may be available under a generic name and several brand names. The generic medications are usually less expensive than the brand name ones. The generic medications have the same chemical formula, but they may or may not be exactly the same strength as the brand-name medications. Also, some brands of pills contain dye or other things that can cause allergic reactions. It is a good idea to talk to the doctor and the pharmacist about whether it is important to use a specific brand of medicine.

Any medicine can cause an allergic reaction. Examples are hives, itching, rashes, swelling, and trouble breathing. Even a tiny amount of a medicine can cause a reaction in patients who are allergic to that medicine. Be *sure* to talk to the doctor before restarting a medicine that has caused an allergic reaction and tell the doctor about any reactions to medicine that your child has had before.

Taking more than one medicine at the same time may cause more side effects or cause one of the medicines to not work as well. Always ask the doctor, nurse, or pharmacist before adding another

medicine, either prescription or bought without a prescription in a store or on the Internet. Be sure that each doctor knows about *all* of the medicines your child is taking. Also tell the doctor about any vitamins, herbal medicines, or supplements your child may be taking. Some of these may have side effects alone or when taken with this medication. It is a very good idea to keep a list with you of the names and doses of all medicines that your child is taking.

Everyone taking medicine should have a physical examination at least once a year.

If you think that your child may be using drugs or alcohol, please tell the doctor right away.

Pregnancy requires special care in the use of medicine. Some medicines can cause birth defects if taken by a pregnant mother. **Please tell the doctor immediately if you suspect the teenager is at risk of becoming pregnant.** The doctor may wish to discuss sexual behavior and/or birth control with your daughter.

Printed information like this applies to children and adolescents in general. If you have questions about the medicine, or if you notice changes or anything unusual, please ask the doctor or nurse. As scientific research advances, knowledge increases and advice changes. Even experts do not always agree. Many medicines have not been “approved” by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in children or use for particular problems. For this reason, use of the medicine for a problem or age group often is not listed in the *Physicians’ Desk Reference*. This does not necessarily mean that the medicine is dangerous or does not work, only that the company that makes the medicine has not received permission to advertise the medicine for use in children. Companies often do not apply for this permission because it is expensive to do the tests needed to apply for approval for use in children. Once a medication is approved by the FDA for any purpose, a doctor is allowed to prescribe it according to research and clinical experience.

Note to Teachers

It is a good idea to talk with the parent(s) about the reason(s) that a medication is being used. If the parent(s) sign consent to release information, it is often helpful for you to talk with the doctor. If the parent(s) give permission, the doctor may ask you to fill out rating forms about your experience with the student’s behavior, feelings, academic performance, and medication side effects. This information is very useful in selecting and monitoring medication treatment. If you have observations that you think are important, do not hesitate to share these with the student’s parent(s) and treating clinicians (with parental consent).

It is very important that the medicine be taken exactly as the doctor instructs. However, everyone forgets to give a medicine on time once in a while. It is a good idea to ask the parent(s) in advance what to do if this happens. Do not stop or change the time you are giving a medicine at school without parental permission. If a medication is to be taken with food, but lunchtime or snack time changes, be sure to notify the parent(s) so appropriate adjustments can be made.

All medicines should be kept in a secure place and should be supervised by an adult. If someone takes too much of a medicine, follow your school procedure for an urgent medical problem.

Taking medicine is a private matter and is best managed discreetly and confidentially. It is important to be sensitive to the student’s feelings about taking medicine.

If you suspect that the student is using drugs or alcohol, please tell the parent(s) or a school counselor right away.

Please tell the parent(s) or school nurse if you suspect medication side effects.

Modifications of the classroom environment or assignments may be useful in addition to medication. The student may need to be evaluated for additional help or a 504 plan or an Individualized Education Plan for learning problems or emotional or behavioral issues.

Any expression of suicidal thoughts or feelings or self-harm by a child or adolescent is a signal of distress and should be taken seriously. These behaviors should not be dismissed as “attention seeking.” School procedures for safety issues should be followed.

What Is Oxcarbazepine (Trileptal, Oxtellar XR)?

Oxcarbazepine was first used to treat seizures (fits, convulsions), so it is sometimes called an *anticonvulsant* or *antiepileptic*. Now it is also used for behavioral problems or bipolar disorder whether or not the patient has seizures. It also may be used when the patient has a history of severe mood changes, sometimes called *mood swings*. When used for emotional or behavioral symptoms, this medicine is more commonly called a *mood stabilizer*.

Oxcarbazepine comes in brand name Trileptal tablets and liquid and brand name Oxtellar XR extended-release tablets.

How Can This Medicine Help?

Oxcarbazepine can reduce aggression, anger, and severe mood swings. It also can treat mania.

How Does This Medicine Work?

Oxcarbazepine is thought to work by stabilizing a part of the brain cell (the cell membrane or envelope) and decreasing the spread of abnormal electrical impulses in the brain cells.

How Long Does This Medicine Last?

Trileptal needs to be taken twice a day. Oxtellar XR may be taken only once a day.

How Will the Doctor Monitor This Medicine?

The doctor will review your child's medical history and physical examination before starting oxcarbazepine. The doctor may order blood or urine tests to be sure your child does not have a hidden kidney condition that would make it unsafe to use this medicine. The doctor or nurse will measure your child's height, weight, pulse, and blood pressure before starting oxcarbazepine.

After the medicine is started, the doctor will want to have regular appointments with you and your child to see how the medicine is working, to see if a dose change is needed, to watch for side effects, to see if oxcarbazepine is still needed, and to see if any other treatment is needed. The doctor or nurse may check your child's height, weight, pulse, and blood pressure. The doctor will need to order blood tests every month or so to make sure that the medicine is at the right dose and to check for side effects, such as a decreased level of sodium in the blood. Blood should be drawn first thing in the morning, 10–12 hours after the evening dose and before the morning dose. Many things can change the levels of oxcarbazepine, so tests may be needed every week when the dose of this or other medicines is being changed.

What Side Effects Can This Medicine Have?

Any medicine can have side effects, including an allergy to the medicine. Because each patient is different, the doctor will monitor the youth closely, especially when the medicine is started. The doctor will work with you to increase the positive effects and decrease the negative effects of the medicine. Please tell the doctor if any of the listed side effects appear or if you think that the medicine is causing any other problems. Not all of the rare or unusual side effects are listed.

Side effects are most common after starting the medicine or after a dose increase. Many side effects can be avoided or lessened by starting with a very low dose and increasing it slowly—ask the doctor.

Allergic Reaction

Tell the doctor in a day or two (if possible, before the next dose of medicine):

- Hives
- Itching
- Rash

Stop the medicine and get *immediate* medical care:

- Trouble breathing or chest tightness
- Swelling of lips, tongue, or throat

General Side Effects

Tell the doctor within a week or two:

- Acne
- Alopecia (hair loss)

The following side effects are more common when first starting the medicine:

- Daytime sleepiness—Do not allow your child to drive, ride a bicycle or motorcycle, or operate machinery if this happens.
- Dizziness
- Nausea or upset stomach—Have your child take the medicine with food.
- Headaches

The following side effects are more common at higher doses:

- Double or blurred vision
- Jerky, side-to-side eye movements (nystagmus)
- Clumsiness or decreased coordination

Side Effects Requiring Prompt Medical Attention

Call the doctor within a day or two:

- Problems with attention or concentration
- New or increased anxiety or nervousness
- New or increased moodiness
- Slowing of movements and/or speech

Very Rare, but Possibly Dangerous, Side Effects

Call the doctor *immediately*:

- Worsening or new suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Agitation
- Confusion
- Skin rash with fever
- Feeling sick or unusually tired
- Loss of appetite
- Persistent nausea
- Vomiting
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes
- Headaches that do not go away
- Dark urine or pale bowel movements
- Swelling of the legs or eyes
- Greatly increased thirst
- Greatly increased or decreased urination (peeing)

Some Interactions With Other Medicines or Food

Please note that the following are only the most likely interactions with other medicines or food.

Caffeine may increase side effects.

Oxcarbazepine interacts with many other medicines. Taking it with another medicine may make one or both not work as well or may cause more side effects. Be sure that each doctor knows about *all* the medicines your child is taking.

Oxcarbazepine may decrease the blood levels of birth control pills (oral contraceptives) so that they do not work as well—this may lead to accidental pregnancy. An alternative form of birth control may be needed.

Carbamazepine (Tegretol) and divalproex (Depakote) may lower the blood levels of oxcarbazepine and make it not work as well.

What Could Happen if This Medicine Is Stopped Suddenly?

Stopping oxcarbazepine suddenly may cause uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms. If the person is taking oxcarbazepine for epilepsy (seizures), stopping the medicine suddenly could lead to an increase in very dangerous seizures (convulsions).

How Long Will This Medicine Be Needed?

The length of time a person needs to take oxcarbazepine depends on what problem is being treated. For example, someone with an impulse control disorder usually takes the medicine only until behavioral therapy begins to work. Someone with bipolar disorder may need to take the medicine for many years. Please ask the doctor about the length of treatment needed.

What Else Should I Know About This Medicine?

Oxcarbazepine increases the risk of sunburn. Be sure that your child wears sunscreen or protective clothing or stays out of the sun.

Taking oxcarbazepine with food may decrease stomach upset.

Oxcarbazepine is processed by the kidneys. Great caution should be used in patients with kidney problems.

Keep the medicine in a safe place under close supervision. An overdose can be very dangerous to small children. Keep the pill container tightly closed and in a dry place, away from bathrooms, showers, and humidifiers.

Notes

Use this space to take notes or to write down questions you want to ask the doctor.

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