

Managing Bipolar I Disorder

Your doctor has prescribed Equetro® (carbamazepine) Extended-Release Capsules to manage the symptoms of your Bipolar I Disorder. Equetro works by helping to reduce mood changes that often have manic “high points” or mixed symptoms of “high points” followed by “depressive low points”.

Taking Equetro as directed is an important step toward managing your symptoms. Another important step is to learn and understand your condition and the medication your doctor has prescribed.

This web site will provide you with important basic information about Bipolar I Disorder and Equetro. For more detailed information, please talk with your healthcare provider.

What causes Bipolar I Disorder?

Approximately 5.7 million American adults have Bipolar Disorders, sometimes called manic depressive illness. The exact cause of Bipolar Disorder is unclear, but it is believed to be linked to an imbalance of certain brain chemicals called neurotransmitters. It is not clear how you developed your Bipolar I Disorder. Sometimes the disorder is traced to your family, but there isn't always a family history.

What are the symptoms of Bipolar I Disorder?

People with Bipolar I Disorder often experience episodes called “manic” periods, when they experience extremely high levels of energy, and other episodes called “depressed” periods when they feel very low.

Sometimes people with bipolar disorder experience “mixed episodes.” That’s when [symptoms of mania and depression](#) occur intermittently. Different people experience Bipolar I Disorder in different ways. So understanding your individual symptom patterns can help your doctor choose the treatment that’s right for you.

Symptoms of Bipolar I Disorder

Symptoms of mania may include:

- Unusually high levels of physical and mental energy or restlessness
- Impulsive behavior
- Reckless spending
- Rapid speech / racing thoughts

- Aggressive behavior
- Extreme irritability
- Little need for sleep
- Poor concentration
- Poor judgment
- Denial that anything is wrong
- Increased sex drive
- Substance abuse
- Grandiose ideas
- Exaggerated optimism and self-confidence

Symptoms of being depressed may include:

- Lasting sadness or hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Loss of interest in everyday activities and things you used to enjoy
- Avoiding socializing with friends and relatives
- Feeling constantly tired
- Inability to concentrate
- Restlessness or irritability
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Change in appetite or weight
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide
- Suicide attempt

Is Bipolar I Disorder associated with an increased risk for suicide?

People with Bipolar I Disorder do have an increased risk of suicide, and it's important to discuss the risk factors for suicide (things that make suicide more likely to happen) with your healthcare provider. If you are experiencing these risk factors, it is important that you contact your healthcare provider immediately or call 911 to seek emergency care.

Why did my physician choose Equetro[®] (carbamazepine) Extended-Release Capsules?

Equetro[®] (carbamazepine) Extended-Release Capsules are effective in treating acute manic and mixed symptoms of Bipolar I Disorder, and their safety and tolerability through research have also been established.

The active ingredient in Equetro[®] (carbamazepine) Extended-Release Capsules is a chemical called carbamazepine, which has been well studied and is used to treat various psychiatric and neurological disorders for many years.

Equetro is a patented slow-release form of carbamazepine and is the only carbamazepine product FDA approved to treat Bipolar I Disorder.

The patented Equetro extended release capsule is the only form of carbamazepine that has been researched and is FDA approved for the treatment of Bipolar I Disorder.

Equetro's patented technology for delivery uses a unique system designed to help patients maintain a smooth level of medication in their systems at all times. This is achieved by using three different types of time-release beads within each capsule. Equetro's technology slowly releases carbamazepine, to help stabilize the irregular moods associated with bipolar disorder.

Equetro is Safe and Well Tolerated

It's reassuring to know that Equetro's safety and tolerability have been studied over extended periods of time. Studies show that the risk of having any adverse reactions to the drug diminishes substantially over the first three months of treatment with Equetro.

Important Safety Information

- **Equetro contains carbamazepine. If you are currently taking another medication that contains carbamazepine, do not begin taking Equetro without discussing this with your healthcare provider.**
- If you are taking any other medications, including oral contraceptives, over-the-counter medications, or herbal products, be sure to inform your healthcare provider, as Equetro can interact with other medications.
- Equetro was generally well tolerated in clinical studies. The most common side effects, particularly when first starting on Equetro, were dizziness, drowsiness, unsteadiness, nausea, and vomiting.
- Contact your healthcare provider if you have any unexplained bruising, fever, or infection since products that contain

carbamazepine have been associated with rare but serious types of blood disorders.

- Carbamazepine has also been associated with rare but serious types of rash. Contact your healthcare provider if you have any unexplained bruising, fever, or infection, or if a rash develops.
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- Carbamazepine can cause harm to a fetus. You should contact your healthcare provider if you are considering becoming pregnant, or are pregnant, in order to discuss the continued risks and benefits.
- Patients with a history of bone marrow problems, or who are allergic to carbamazepine, or who are sensitive to tricyclic antidepressants should not take Equetro[®] (carbamazepine) Extended-Release Capsules.
- Patients with bipolar disorder have an increased risk for suicide. It is important to discuss risk factors for suicide with your healthcare provider. If you are experiencing these risk factors, it is important to contact your healthcare provider immediately or seek emergency care.

Full Prescribing Information

Please see [Full Prescribing Information](#) for more details about Equetro.

Important ways you can help with your treatment

As with any other medications, Equetro does not work for everyone, but there are a number of things you can do to get the most from this treatment:

- Be sure to take your medication as prescribed by your doctor.
- If you feel your medication is not controlling your symptoms, be sure to tell your doctor.
- Always follow your doctor's instructions carefully, and be sure to keep an open line of communication with your doctor as your treatment progresses.

Treatments for Bipolar I Disorder, taken exactly as your doctor has prescribed and given the chance to work fully, can provide you with the best chance to control symptoms of Bipolar I Disorder.

There are two easy ways to take Equetro[®] (carbamazepine) Extended-Release Capsules.

- Equetro can be taken orally by swallowing the capsule whole, with or without food.
- Equetro capsules can also be opened and sprinkled onto soft foods like applesauce. It is important to use soft foods that you do not have to chew in order to make sure that the time-release beads are not prematurely broken. This is a great strategy for those people who have a hard time swallowing medications.

If you miss a dose of Equetro, it is usually best to take it as soon as you remember, but check with your doctor.

If you are taking any other medications, including oral contraceptives, over-the-counter medications, or herbal products, the levels of Equetro or the other medications in your system can be affected. So be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any other medications you are taking, as he or she may want to adjust the dose of one or more of the medications.

Please see [Important Safety Information](#) and [Full Prescribing Information](#) for details about Equetro.

Frequently Asked Questions About Taking Equetro

Will I Gain a Lot of Weight While Taking Equetro?

Most people who took Equetro in clinical trials did not gain a lot of extra weight.

Who should not take Equetro?

People who are currently taking another medication that contains carbamazepine should not begin taking Equetro without discussing it with their healthcare providers. Other carbamazepine containing products include: Carbatrol, Tegretol, Epitol, Finlepsin, Sirtal, Stazepine, Telesmin, Biston, Atretol, Calepsin, and Timonil.

People with a history of bone marrow problems, or who are allergic to

carbamazepine, or who are sensitive to medicines in the same class as Equetro should not take Equetro[®] Extended-Release Capsules. Other people have certain genes which may put them at risk.

Also, if you are currently taking or have recently taken a class of antidepressant medications known as monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), please speak with your physician before taking Equetro.

It is important to inform your doctor if you feel that you fall into any of these categories. If you aren't sure what type of medicines you are taking, bring your medications with you to your next doctor's appointment.

How should I take Equetro?

Equetro is easy to take.

- Equetro can be taken with or without meals.
- For patients who have difficulty swallowing capsules, Equetro capsules can be opened and sprinkled onto soft foods such as applesauce. However, you should not crush or chew the contents of the capsule.
- If you miss a dose of Equetro, it is usually best to take it as soon as you remember, however, check with your doctor first.

Can Equetro be taken with other medications?

Equetro can react with other medications. When Equetro is taken in combination with certain medications, including oral contraceptives, over-the-counter drugs, or herbal products, levels of Equetro or the other medications can be affected by the combination. Equetro should not be taken with other drugs containing carbamazepine.

Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any other medications you are taking, since he or she may want to adjust the dose of one or more of the medications.

Are there serious side effects associated with carbamazepine?

Carbamazepine, the active ingredient in Equetro, has been associated with rare but serious types of blood disorders. Your healthcare provider may order blood tests to check for those disorders. Carbamazepine has also been associated with rare but serious types of rash. Contact your healthcare provider if you

have any unexplained bruising, fever, or infection, or if a rash develops.

What are the common side effects of Equetro?

The most common side effects, especially when starting Equetro, are dizziness, drowsiness, unsteadiness, nausea, and vomiting. If you experience side effects while taking Equetro, talk to your doctor. He or she may want to adjust your dose.

Are there special considerations for women?

You should not take Equetro if you are pregnant, nursing, or may become pregnant. Equetro may reduce the effectiveness of birth control pills. Before taking Equetro, be sure to discuss any questions about pregnancy, nursing, or birth control with your healthcare provider.

In addition to taking my medication, what else can I do to help manage my Bipolar I Disorder?

With the help of your doctor and your Equetro therapy, you can take charge of your health. These basic steps will help you take giant strides toward a brighter future:

1. Learn all you can about Bipolar I Disorder.
2. Be aware of what triggers your symptoms.
3. Go to the end of this web site and read the list of organizations that can provide you with reliable information about your condition.
4. Follow your doctor's advice and take Equetro exactly as your doctor prescribed.
5. Stay with your medication schedule and your scheduled appointments with your doctor. Your treatment can work only if you take Equetro as prescribed.
6. Keep your doctor informed. The more your doctor knows about you and how you are managing your health and lifestyle, the more he or she can help you.
7. Use your existing support network. Trusted family and friends can help you remember to take your medication, give you feedback about your progress, and provide you with encouragement and support.
8. Joining a community support group can be another source of

- understanding and encouragement. To locate a group near you, contact one of the organizations listed at the end of this web site.
9. Live a healthy lifestyle. Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs, as they can trigger your symptoms and cause problems with your medication. Remember the basics – regular exercise, a balanced diet and proper sleep can help you feel good and are beneficial to your overall health.

Your doctors and nurses are important members of your healthcare treatment team, but the most important member is YOU.

You are the only one who can take your medication as directed and you are the only one who can make the decisions that can help you strike a healthy balance in your life.

This information should not take the place of talking to your doctor about treatment, dosing and possible side effects. Please talk to your doctor about any concerns you may have.

Reminder: Equetro[®] contains carbamazepine. If you are currently taking another medication that contains carbamazepine, do not begin taking Equetro[™] without discussing this with your healthcare provider.

Please see [Important Safety Information](#) and [Full Prescribing Information](#) for details about Equetro[™].

What do Equetro extended release capsules look like?

Equetro is available in 100mg, 200mg and 300mg extended release capsules.

Available in 100-, 200-, and 300-mg capsules



IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT MY EQUETRO® (carbamazepine) Extended-Release Capsules THERAPY:

Date: _____

My Equetro dosage is: _____

After _____ days, I should change the dosage to _____.

The other prescription medicines, non-prescription medicines, herbals, and supplements that I am taking are as follows:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I need lab tests on this schedule: _____

Things that can trigger my Bipolar I Disorder are: _____

My exercise, sleep, and diet goals are: _____

I SHOULD CALL THE DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY IF

- My symptoms are not being controlled
- I am experiencing side effects (unexplained rash, bruising &/or infection)
- I have risk factors for suicide

Name of healthcare provider: _____

Phone # of healthcare provider: _____

Other notes: _____

Sources of more information about Bipolar I Disorder

American Psychiatric Association (APA) 1000 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1825, Arlington, VA 22209-3901 *phone:* (703) 907-7300 www.psych.org

American Psychological Association 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242 *Phone:* (800) 374-2721 www.apa.org | www.apahelpcenter.org

Brain & Behavior Research Foundation (formerly NARSAD) 90 Park Avenue, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10016, *phone:* (800) 829-8289
www.bbrfoundation.org

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) 730 Franklin Street, Suite 501, Chicago, IL 60610-7224 *Phone:* (800) 826-3632 *Fax:* (312) 642-7243
www.DBSAAlliance.org

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) 3803 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 100, Arlington, VA 22203 *Phone:* (703) 524-7600 *Fax:* (703) 524-9094, *Information Helpline:* (800) 950-NAMI www.nami.org

National Institute of Mental Health Office of Communications, 6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 8184, MSC 9663, Bethesda, MD 20892-9336 *Phone:* (301) 443-4513 *Fax:* (301) 443-4279 *Toll Free:* (866) 615-NIMH (6464) *TTY:* (800) 433-5959 www.nimh.nih.gov

National Mental Health Association 2000 N Beauregard Street, 6th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22311 *Phone:* (703) 684-7722 *Fax:* (703) 684-5968 *Mental Health Resource Center:* (800) 969-NMHA *TTY:* (800) 433-5959
www.nmha.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 666 Broadway, Suite 200, New York, NY 10012 *Phone:* (866) 350-5465 *Fax:* (212) 529-1959 *Toll Free:* (800) 273-TALK (8255) www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Mental Health Services 1 Choke Cherry Road, 6th Floor, Rockville, MD 20857 *Phone:* (800) 726-7427 *Fax:* (240) 276-1970 www.samhsa.gov